The Children of Cupa

Mary E. Mannix

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THE CHILDREN OF CUPA.

"The bushes parted, Francisco was there, hearing, seeing."—Page 126.

THE CHILDREN OF CUPA.

BY

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THE CHILDREN OF CUPA.

CHAPTER I.

SUMMER PLANS.—THE CUPEÑOS.

THE mother had been very ill, and the question was, where shall we take her so that she may get thoroughly well? It must be some place where the family might accompany her. She had declared that she would not go without papa and Nellie and Walter.

It was nearing the close of schooltime, and papa's yearly vacation was at hand, so there would be no difficulty on that score. Some one had suggested Santa Monica as affording a complete change of scene, but the doctor tabooed that place and she herself did not care for it.

"She is already too near the sea," the man of medicine said. "She needs entire change; she would only grow ill again and nervous amid the clatter of hotel life and the crowds on the beach."

"But we might take a cottage," suggested Aunt Mary.

"Yes—I know those seaside cottages," said the doctor, "that is, those which are built to rent for the season. A few boards thrown to-

gether, and only a pretence made of papering the walls inside—draughts rushing through the rooms continually and underneath the house as well. Why, my dear sir, you can actually see the carpet rising in waves from the floor. They are all erected on piles, you know. No seaside cottage for our invalid—no, indeed."

"What do you say to the mountains, doctor?" asked Mr. Page.

"The very thing," was the reply. "But there are objections to be made in that case also. Accommodations are not usually comfortable—the food is always plentiful, but not always choice."

"I was thinking of camping," said Mr. Page. "I have a complete camping outfit and at my call a man, Charlie Dorner, who is the prince of cooks. He is, besides, a fine general utility man—can do anything."

"That would be the ideal; but," sighed the doctor, "I wish I could go along."

"And so you can; or join us later."

"Well, we'll see about that. Just now we're talking of Mrs. Page. If you have an outfit of your own you need not be at anybody's mercy. But you must not choose too high a location, nor where it is likely to be too warm, nor an utterly inaccessible place. By that I

mean she must not be too far from the railroad —or her doctor. What do you say to the Springs? I have an idea that the air and the hot water together would complete her cure."

"The air!" exclaimed Aunt Mary. "Why, it is only fourteen miles from here; there can't be any difference in the atmosphere. Besides, those springs are in a valley; you can't have seen them. The fogs are dreadful in the early morning I have been told."

"Not at *my* Springs," said the doctor with a smile. "I'm speaking of Warner's Ranch, although I've stayed at the others and have seen wondrous cures effected there, I assure you."

Aunt Mary had not been long in California, but she was fond of "reading up," and she had been reading about Warner's Ranch.

"Do you mean the springs which belong, or were supposed to belong, to the Indians, from whose possession they are now going to be taken?"

"Yes," replied the doctor; "and I think the whole proceeding is an infamous outrage."

Nellie and Walter had been sitting quietly listening to their elders. But at this point in the conversation Walter, who was thirteen, exclaimed:

"Oh, papa, let us go there, won't you?

"Just think, Aunt Mary," he continued, "it is a regular Indian village, and in the summer the Indians move out of their houses and rent them to the white people. I knew a boy who lived in one, and he said it was fine. Wouldn't it be grand making believe to be an Indian!"

"I sympathize with those poor creatures very much," said Aunt Mary. "I think it is heartless to evict them from their homes; but I *don't* believe I should care to occupy one of the houses. It might not be clean, you know."

"Well, that's as may be," said the doctor. "I have known persons loud in their praises of the place, and others whining about dirt and discomfort. You would not be subject to anything of that kind. You would have your large, clean, comfortable tents."

"Let's tell mother. Let's ask her if she would like to go," said Nellie, speaking for the first time.

"Of course she'll like it; she's certain to like it," cried Walter, springing to his feet. They were not long in ascending the stairs, though they went quietly, having become accustomed to making as little noise as possible during their mother's long and serious illness. Now that she was so much better they had not renounced

the habit, which had become a sort of second nature to them.

"Come in," said a sweet, low voice as Nellie tapped on the door. In a moment they were both kneeling beside the lounge where their mother lay.

"You don't feel *very* bad this afternoon, mamma?" inquired Walter, anxiously.

"Oh, no," she replied. "On the contrary, I am feeling particularly well and strong to-day. But the doctor says I must lie down the greater part of the time. I thought I heard his voice just now. Hasn't he gone yet?"

"No; that's why we came, mother," said Nellie. "They're discussing things in the library. They think now they'll take you to Warner's Hot Springs, and we want you to go there, we do, badly. Oh, it will be great fun."

"Papa is talking of getting out the tents and the camping wagon and taking Charlie Dorner along. Oh, it will be lots of fun. I hope you like the plan."

"I am sure I shall like it," replied their mother. "I am very fond of camping. Don't you remember the summer we spent at Broad Beach?"

"Yes, that was lots of fun," said Walter. "But that wasn't anything to what this will

be. Fancy, mother, an Indian village—a real Indian one. And you can live in their houses if you want to—though Aunt Mary says she doesn't believe they are very clean."

"We would have our tents," said Nellie. "Dr. Madden says he thinks the water would do you a great deal of good, mother."

"I feel better already," said the mother, sitting up and smoothing back her hair. "I want to start at once."

They all laughed, and presently the children were seated beside her, each holding a hand, wondering when everything would be in readiness for the start.

"We don't have to get any new clothes, do we?" inquired Nellie, to whom the bugbear of a summer outfit was receding into the background.

"No; we shall wear our oldest things," replied the mother. "Still, we shall not aim to make scarecrows of ourselves, my dear, as some people really seem to do when they go camping."

The children laughed again. "As though you *could* make a scarecrow of yourself!" exclaimed Nellie, looking fondly at her fair, delicate mother in her dainty white wrapper, and shoulder shawl of soft, scarlet wool.

"But suppose they would put the Indians out

while we are there; then what would we do, mother?" asked Nellie. "I couldn't bear to be near and see it," said the tender-hearted child. "I think it's dreadful, don't you, mother?"

"Yes, it is," rejoined her mother. "Yet it does not seem possible to avoid it."

"Tell us about it, mother, will you?" pleaded Walter. "There has been much fuss over it in the papers. Why do the Indians have to go away from this place where they have lived so long?"

Mrs. Page reflected for a moment before replying. Then she said:

"I can't remember all the details, and you would not be interested in them if I could; but as nearly as I know the facts of the case I shall try to relate them to you.

"Many years ago Col. Juan José Warner received a grant of immense tracts of land from the Mexican government. On these lands, or part of them, some tribes of Indians were then living. They and their forefathers had lived there for many years. It was a provision of the grants or patents given by the Mexican government that the 'mission Indians' were never to be disturbed. In nearly all cases their rights were respected. Do you understand, dear children?"

Walter nodded, but Nellie said: "Mamma, how was it that the *Mexican* government granted lands to people in California?"

"Why, don't you know that California was once part of Mexico?" inquired Walter, with a little air of superiority.

"I believe I used to, but maybe I have forgotten it," murmured Nellie, quite discomfited, as she always was when her brother asserted his better knowledge of history and current events.

"Well, mamma, what next?" inquired the boy. "We don't want to 'lose the thread.' That's what our teacher says when the scholars' attention seems to wander."

"After some time," resumed Mrs. Page, "this tract of land, known by the name of Warner's Ranch, was sold to Governor Downey, who did not molest the Indians. There were several tribes besides those who lived at the Hot Springs. But later there was a lawsuit, and many endeavors were made to eject them, on the ground that they had only occupied the land *after* it had been granted to Warner.

"This lawsuit has been going on for many years. Recently it has been decided, very unjustly, most people think, that the Indians must go."

"But where are they to go?" asked Nellie,

her round blue eyes opening with every word. "Where *can* they go?"

"The United States government will place them on some other reservation," said Mrs. Page. "A commission has been appointed to select one where the land is fertile and water plentiful. It will not be very long now, I think, before some place will be decided upon. It is a very good thing that every one on the commission is a friend of the Indians, and would allow them to remain in their present home if they could arrange it."

"Is Warner's Ranch a very large tract of land, mother?" asked Walter.

"Very large, my son."

"Why can't they let the Indians stay on their little bit of land, then? They haven't a great deal, have they?"

"Not much, compared with the extent of the whole tract. However, the owners of the ranch wish to derive profit from the springs, as the Indians are doing, only they would erect wooden buildings and make many improvements. They wish to make the springs a popular resort."

"I'd never go there if they did, never!" said Nellie. "How can the government be so unjust as to put those Indians out, when they have always lived there?"

"It seems that when the tract was originally sold the Indians should have presented their claim to the portion they occupied. As they did not do that, after a certain number of years their rights were forfeited. That is the law."

"Why didn't they present their claims?" asked Walter.

"Simply, my son, I suppose, because they were ignorant of the requirements of the law. They had lived there always; they could not remember having heard of a time when their forefathers had not lived there. They did not dream they would ever be disturbed. And so it came to pass that when they were informed steps had been taken to eject them they paid no attention to it."

"Why didn't they get a lawyer to attend to it for them?"

"After some time they did. There were able lawyers employed on both sides. The suit has lasted for many years, has been taken from one court to another, and now it has been finally decided that the Indians must go. I have heard that many of them still refuse to believe it."

"I call it a beastly shame," said Walter. "Why don't they fight?"

"What could a couple of hundred warriors do against the United States government?" replied Mrs. Page.

"I thought the Comanches and Apaches, and those Indian tribes liked to fight just for the sake of fighting," said Nellie.

"That is probably true," replied Mrs. Page; "but our California Indians are neither Comanches nor Apaches, my dear. They have always been peaceful, and have been called the 'mission Indians' from the time of the first establishment of the Spanish Franciscans at San Diego. The Warner Ranch Indians are called *Cupeños,* from *Cupa,* the name given to the hot springs. Comfortable and happy they were while under the control of the mission Fathers; but since the time that the missions were abolished and the priests scattered things have been very different. That was after the Mexican War, about which you both know something, I believe. Certainly Walter does."

"I'm very anxious to go, aren't you, mother?" asked Walter.

"Yes, if it has been decided that it will benefit me," said Mrs. Page. "I should like to start to-morrow if I could."

"Here they come—papa, Aunt Mary and the doctor," said Nellie, as footsteps were heard

ascending the stairs; "I hope they haven't found many objections."

Everybody was smiling as they entered, and the doctor said: "Mrs. Page, no doubt the little ones have prepared you for our verdict. We have decided to send you to the hot springs. The sooner you are ready to start the better."

CHAPTER II.

THE JOURNEY.—FRANCISCO.

On a bright morning in early June, Charlie Dorner drove up to the Pages' door with a large camping wagon, to which two strong, stout mules were harnessed. The wagon was then laden with things brought from the house in barrels, boxes, baskets, and bundles. One not familiar with the capacity of California mules would have thought it impossible for two animals to haul the tremendous load on the long climb, which was to end sixty miles in the mountains, three thousand feet above the level of the sea.

Charlie Holden, in a suit of corduroy, with high boots and leggings, and a huge sombrero of Mexican make on his curly red head, excited the

admiration of Walter, who had never seen him before. The mules started off without balking after one crack of Charlie's whip. The speed with which they started was not great, but Mr. Page, who stood with the children watching the departure, said they would be likely to keep the same pace until their destination was reached on the afternoon of the following day.

"I'd like awfully well to go along," said Walter. "I wish I had thought of it before. Would you have let me go, papa?"

"No; I think it is better that we should all keep together," said Mr. Page. "I am sure mother would not have considered it for a moment."

"I think it is nearly time to start, don't you, father?" inquired Nellie, consulting a diminutive silver watch which her mother had given her on her tenth birthday. "Why, it's almost *eight* o'clock, and the train goes at nine."

Mr. Page laughed. "The cab will not be here before half-past," he said; "and even then we shall have more than ample time to reach the train."

Nellie sighed. "I think I'll go in and see if I can do anything for mamma," she said. "This does seem such a dreadfully long morning."

"You were up at half-past five," said Mr. Page. "That is why it seems so long. But we shall be off pretty soon, and then you will find time flying. At least I hope so, for we have quite a journey before us."

When they were seated at last in the train in which they were to make the first part of the trip, with the mother well wrapped in her traveling cloak, the children amused themselves by looking out of the car windows at the groves of lemons, oranges, and nuts extending on both sides of the railroad. Thus an hour passed quickly, and the station where they were to leave the train was reached.

"The mountains are beginning already," said Walter, as they stood on the platform awaiting the arrival of the stage. It was indeed a wild-looking spot. Sheer from the road high hills rose ruggedly, clothed here and there with mesquite bushes and wild fern, now beginning to wither through lack of rain.

"Yes, the mountains are beginning, as you say," remarked Mr. Page. "We shall have ample opportunity to become acquainted with them to-day."

As he spoke a buggy, rather dilapidated in appearance, the horse driven by a Mexican, came in sight. Mr. Page and his wife had arranged

to drive in this, thinking it would not be so fatiguing as riding in the stage.

"Good-morning, Juan," said Mr. Page.

"Good-morning, Señor," the man replied. "Not very pretty, this, says Señor Smith, but comfortable, yes."

"Well, we care more for comfort than beauty just here and now," rejoined Mr. Page. "Mother," he continued, turning to his wife, "are you ready to drive with me for the eight hours or so?"

"Oh, not so long, Señor," said the man. "In six you will be well at Santa Isabel."

"We do not go so far to-night, I think," said Mr. Page. "However, that will depend on circumstances."

Mrs. Page was ready. "Shall we start at once, Ralph?" she inquired. "Or shall we wait and see the others off first?"

"We ought to go ahead of them," said the husband; "otherwise we shall have the dust of the road in our eyes all the way. Those stage horses make clouds of dust."

"Well, then, we had better go ahead. Let us wait, though, till the stage arrives. I want to feel that they are coming just behind us," she said.

"Here it is now!" shouted Walter.

"My patience!" exclaimed Aunt Mary. "What a ramshackle affair it is—nothing but a dilapidated covered wagon."

The driver, a thin-faced, dark-skinned young man with a strong nasal accent, showed a set of brilliant teeth as he rejoined pleasantly:

"Mebbe it *looks* ramshackle, miss; but you'll find it all right as a carrier. There's lots of folks come up and down *oncet* or *twicet* a week just for the pleasure of ridin' in this here stage."

With these words he threw the reins over the backs of the horses and, stepping upon the platform, prepared to put in the freight and baggage before seating the passengers. Sack after sack, box after box, package after package was deposited in the immense "boot" at the back of the vehicle; then the space under and between the seats was filled to its utmost capacity.

"See here," said Mr. Page, who had been watching the transfer with some concern, "where are you going to put your passengers? Or, rather, where are they going to put their feet? Do you intend to have them sit Turk fashion on the seats?"

The driver showed his brilliant teeth once more as he answered, good-humoredly: "Plenty of room for passengers, mister. I understand

you and the lady are goin' in the buggy. There won't be no one in the stage, 'ceptin' the other lady and the little boy and gal and myself. You ought to see 'em sometimes, settin' on each other's laps."

"Oh, there's room enough in one way," said Mr. Page; "but they will have no place to rest their feet. Why do you crowd the stage with baggage and freight? Why don't you have an extra wagon?"

"Ha, ha!" laughed the driver, though not at all disrespectfully. "That *would* be a cost—to freighters.

"But," he continued, quite seriously, "this is a larger load of freight and baggage than usual. There's going to be a party up at Julian to-night, and there's a good many extras.

"If you'll step in now, ladies," he went on, turning politely to Aunt Mary and Nellie, "you can have your choice of seats. The lady can set in the back with the hull seat to herself, and she won't have to sit Turk fashion, neither. The little gal can do the same, and when you put a robe at your back—plenty of 'em here—you'll be like you was reclinin' on a couch. Otherwise, I don't deny that if you sit up straight you'll have your knees at your chin, for there won't be no other place to put 'em,

with the boxes and bags on the floor. The little feller can set with me in front."

Walter sprang into the place allotted him.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "*Our* legs are not going to be cramped. You've got all the baggage under the other seats behind there."

"That's the way it's got to be," said the driver gravely. "Got to have my legs free to steer the ship. Holdin' them mules ain't always a joke."

"Oh, are they dangerous?" queried Aunt Mary in alarm, in the act of gathering her skirts about her to enter the vehicle. Nellie was already seated sidewise on her perch.

"Not a bit dangerous, ma'am," rejoined the driver. "Never been an accident on this here line. But there could be, and there might be without keerful drivers—we have 'em on this route——"

"And couldn't you, don't you think, dust off the seats?" asked Aunt Mary, still hesitating, her skirts in her hands.

The boy here burst into a fit of uncontrollable mirth. "It's plain to be seen this here's your first trip to the mountains, ma'am. Why, what would be the use? Before we get to Witch Creek we'll be fairly eatin' dust."

With a solemn shake of the head, but making

no further remarks, Aunt Mary now took her place. Giving her and Nellie each a heavy woolen blanket to serve as cushions for their backs, the driver also prepared to envelop them in linen robes, to preserve them as much as possible from the dust they were to "eat" before nightfall.

"Oh, I can't have that thing around me," said Nellie, tossing it aside. "I want to be able to move about. I'm not afraid of the dust."

Mrs. Page, who stood beside her husband watching the proceedings, was about to remonstrate, but the husband said:

"Let her alone, Martha. The dust will not hurt her. The child is right."

The driver nodded his head in approbation and prepared to take his own seat. "Here comes the mail," he said, as a short, squat man approached, carrying a sack on his shoulder. "We'll be off in a jiffy now."

"There you are, Dingley!" the man called out as he flung the mail pouch at Walter's feet.

"Come, mother," said Mr. Page, helping his wife into the buggy; "we must get a start, or *we'll* be in for the dust."

"That's so," rejoined Dingley, "that's so. I'll give ye five minutes' start to forge ahead."

Presently the brisk little buggy horse was

trotting ahead, and as it turned the first bend of the road the stage driver touched his mules. Off they started.

Despite the dust which covered them from head to foot, even penetrating the luncheon basket (which they opened about noon by the side of a tiny, clear spring half hidden amid a grove of cottonwood trees), the party enjoyed the ride very much. By the time they reached Witch Creek, where they intended passing the night if Mrs. Page felt much fatigued, she thought herself fully able to push on to Santa Isabel. From there they would have to make an early start for the hot springs next morning.

Three miles and a half further on their journey ended for the day. They had enjoyed every inch of it, yet were delighted to find themselves, at the close of the day, in the long, white, one-story hotel, set invitingly amid a grove of trees larger than any they had seen in California. After an appetizing supper they retired to rest. Everybody slept well, and seven o'clock found them ready for the road once more.

To the surprise of the children, who thought they were to make the remainder of their journey in the company of their friend Dingley, they learned that such was not the case. He had continued on his route up to Julian. The

way of our travelers lay in another direction. It was a delight to step into the spring wagon awaiting them, to find themselves speeding along the edge of the foot-hills, through the broad valley, until, almost before they had become accustomed to their surroundings, the driver, pointing to a speck in the distance, apparently at the very base of a rugged mountain, announced: "There are the hot springs."

"How close to the mountain they are," said Walter.

"Not so close as they seem," was the reply. "They are seven miles distant, but the atmosphere is so clear that they appear much nearer."

A sudden turn in the road now hid the village from view. As they wound on and on it would reappear and disappear, always under some new aspect of wild picturesqueness and beauty.

"You see that highest peak over there, just above the village?" said the driver, pointing with his whip. "Well, that is the 'Eagle.' The two other mountains nearest are called the 'Rabbit' and the 'Squaw.' "

"What lies behind that small mountain chain at whose foot the village seems to nestle?" inquired Aunt Mary.

"The desert," replied the driver. "Those hills are all that separate these lands from the dreariest wastes you ever saw."

Soon they came in sight of small, cultivated patches of land, whose rich, black soil gave evidence of its fertility. Adobe houses, with brush additions, could be seen everywhere. The sound of falling water pleasantly greeted their ears.

"Is there a waterfall here?" asked Mrs. Page.

"No, ma'am," said the driver. "At least, not a natural waterfall. That sound is made by the waste water from the bathhouses flowing into the irrigation ditch, which is used by all these people in turn to irrigate their lands."

Some one shouted "Hello!" and in a moment Charlie Dorner was seen approaching. "Turn in this way, if you please," he said. "I've found a splendid camping place—not too sunny, not too shady, not too close to anybody, yet very near the baths."

Mrs. Page remained in the wagon, but the others were soon following Charlie down a short incline leading to a miniature grove of cottonwoods. A pair of pepper trees stood guard at the entrance. The main tent—there were three—was arranged as a sitting-room. Here Mrs. Page and Aunt Mary and Nellie were to sleep. During the day their bunks were fastened to

the sides of the tent and hidden by curtains. A large rug covered the boarded floor. Board floors are somewhat of a luxury among the Cupa folk, especially the campers.

A table covered by a dark red cloth stood in the middle. Comfortable camp chairs were scattered all about. In one of the other tents Mr. Page and Walter were to sleep, in another Charlie would take up his quarters.

An abandoned brush-house in the rear, about fifteen feet square, had been converted into a kitchen and dining-room, divided by an archway made of pepper boughs. When Mrs. Page arrived she was shown to the tent sitting-room. She pronounced it perfect.

The children, eager to explore the neighborhood, scarcely took time to unpack their belongings before they asked to be allowed to go out for a walk. Permission being given, their father said he would go along. "Oh, yes, do come, papa," said Nellie. "You can show us everything."

"We are now on the outskirts of Cupa," he said merrily as, after descending the declivity which led to their camping place, they stood at the head of a street, or road, with houses straggling on either side to the number of forty or fifty. In the distance could be seen flourishing vineyards and green patches of land.

Here and there a man was lazily ploughing. To the left arose a great cloud of steam ascending slowly into the air, where it was soon lost in the clear blue.

"There are the springs," said Mr. Page. "Shall we go down?"

"Yes, yes, let us go!" cried both children. As they strolled along the dusty street Walter observed that he saw only white people.

"Where are the Indians?" he inquired anxiously. "Have they gone so far away from their homes that we can't see them at all?"

"Oh, no," replied the father. "On our return, if we take a short cut to the right, we shall probably see a good many of them living in those brush-houses."

And it so proved. After they had gone down to the springs, surveyed the boiling pools bursting from the solid granite and taken a drink from one of them, they returned by the back road, and found that every brush-house they passed was inhabited by Indians, in various stages of comfort or discomfort. These houses generally stood from fifty to a hundred feet in the rear of the adobe dwelling, rented for the season at a good price to the visitors in search of health or recreation.

The people manifested no curiosity at the

appearance of the strangers; even the Indian children were stolid and indifferent. Later the Pages were to learn that the reserve could be broken when they came to look upon the strangers as friends. Making a détour, the trio advanced toward the church, which stood on a slight knoll overlooking the village.

Everything around it was bleak and lean, the plaster falling from the walls both outside and inside. They tried to enter, but the door was locked. Through the windows they could see the little altar adorned with bright tissue-paper flowers. There appeared to be no one in the vicinity, and Walter, in a spirit of mischief, picked up a stick from the ground and touched the bell which hung in front of the door on two heavy crossbeams, gnarled and worm-eaten.

"Walter, you should not have done that," said the father, as a single, sharp, clear note resounded through the air.

"It is what they all do," said a boyish voice back of him. "It is a beautiful sound, don't you think?"

"Where did you come from, my boy?" asked Mr. Page as the young stranger advanced. He was about Walter's age, clad in blue overalls and flannel shirt. The battered felt hat which served him as head covering was held in his hand.

"I live there," he replied, pointing to a ruined adobe house at some distance behind the church. "I live there with Mauricio. He is my uncle. He is the priest."

"The priest!" exclaimed Mr. Page. "And living in such a place! Are you not an Indian boy?" he continued, looking at the swarthy skin, black eyes and raven hair. "Surely you are an Indian, and there are no Indian priests, in this country, at least."

"He is not a real priest, my uncle," replied the boy. "But that is what they call him—the Protestants, I mean. I told you that way just for fun."

He was smiling broadly, showing his white teeth, and his eyes twinkled merrily.

"How did you know we were Catholics?" inquired Mr. Page rather gravely, not very well pleased at this facetiousness.

"I saw you kneel in front of the church, I saw you make the sign of the cross; and I knew then that you did not come to make fun, as so many do."

"But why do *you* make fun and tell us your uncle is a priest when he is not one? Where is he now?"

"He is away at Palomas—at the sheep-shearing," said the boy. "I will tell it to you what

I mean. My uncle takes care for the church—the Father comes not often here any more, and every Sunday my uncle rings the bell, or sometimes I do, and the people come, and he says the prayers aloud. And that is why the people who do not know about Catholics call him the priest. We let them do; we don't care. They don't know much—some of them."

"You speak English very well," said Walter.

"And why not?" answered the boy. "I have been to school six years at Deming, at the Mission. Maybe I go back in the fall, I don't know."

"What is your name?" inquired Mr. Page.

"I am called Francisco Perez," was the reply. "I will fetch water for you, or wood, or do anything that I can do, and I will not charge you much. Oh, I can do many things, for I have been to the Mission to school."

"Are there many boys here?" asked Walter.

"What kind of boys?" questioned Francisco. "White boys, or Indian?"

"Oh, any kind."

"Just now there are no white boys but you. Maybe some will come. And not many Indians, either. Many are gone to Mesa Grande and around there, picking berries and cherries, and then there will be the grape picking."

"Will you play with us sometimes and show us places?" continued Walter.

Francisco laughed. "I do not play much," he said, "and there are not places to show. You see how it is," with a swing of his hand over the valley. "But I will do what I can."

"We are camping down there," said Mr. Page, pointing to the three white tents in the midst of the cottonwood grove.

"You have the best place. In a week you could not have got there, for others are coming soon and would have taken it."

"Well, come down, Francisco, and we'll see what we can do," said Mr. Page. "You look like a good boy, and Walter will want a companion. Good-by for the present."

"Adios," said Francisco, retracing his steps to his ruined dwelling and, the children noticed, not once looking back, though they followed him with their eyes until he disappeared within the doorless opening to his home. When they got back to camp Charlie was waiting with a dinner of fried rabbit, potatoes, fresh tomatoes, and melons purchased from the Indians that morning. As they sat in the brush dining-room, within sound of the pleasant waterfall, around the well-spread table, all were unanimous in declaring that the viands could not have been surpassed.

CHAPTER III.

AT THE SPRING.

"I SUGGEST that we all take a little *siesta,*" said Aunt Mary after dinner. "We shall feel much better for the rest of the day if we do."

The children looked at each other. Siestas had not entered into their plans at all.

"We don't have to, do we, mother?" asked Walter. "You know Nellie and I never do such a dreadful thing at home."

"What do you purpose doing?" inquired their father.

"Oh, we didn't know," said Walter. "We thought of going down to the springs again and watching the people bathe."

"They don't *bathe* in the pools from which they drink, surely," said Aunt Mary in disgust. "Don't tell me they do that, Walter."

"I thought there was another pool," said Walter. "I'm certain I heard them say something about washing down there this morning."

"Oh, that man was speaking of the laundry where the women wash the clothes," said Mr. Page. "He said it was quite interesting to watch them."

"Bother!" said Walter. "I thought there was a pool for bathing, and that we might paddle about in it, just as we used to do at Ti Juana. But, anyhow, Nellie and I don't want to take any *siesta*, do we, Nellie?"

His sister shook her head. "Just let's go out and ramble around," she said. "We'll find something to amuse us."

"There is something already," said Mr. Page, as the clear note of a bird broke upon the midday stillness. Soft and sweet it trilled, then loud and shrill, then quivered down to a melancholy note, and again gradually ascended, terminating in one long, beautiful, slowly-dying tremolo.

"*What* can that be?" cried Mrs. Page. "It seems almost like an angel's song. I have never heard anything like it."

"It is only me—Francisco," said a boyish voice on the outside, while a pair of bright eyes peered in between the interstices of the sylvan dining-room.

"Come in, come in!" cried Walter, hurrying from his place. "I want mother to see you."

"Mother," he continued, as the boy entered slowly, cap in hand, "this is Francisco, our friend whom we met near the church this morning. Is there anything he can do?"

Mrs. Page extended her slim white hand. The boy took it and said: "I can work very well. I could fetch water."

"I do not believe there is anything you *could* do," replied Mrs. Page. "We have a man who does all we require. We shall not need any carrying of water, I think. I see there are hydrants not far away."

"Oh, but that is not to drink—that water. It is not so *very* good," said Francisco. "But farther up, about half a mile, or maybe a little more, there is a beautiful spring. *That* is nice and cold and good to drink. Some carry it in buckets, but I would fetch it on a little wagon, in a barrel. And I can give you another barrel in which to keep it. Out there under the largest pepper tree it would be very good."

"Do you hear, Charlie?" asked Mr. Page. "Francisco tells us he can bring very good drinking water. It will be an excellent plan, I think, so let him do it."

"Yes," replied Charlie, appearing from the other end of the room. "I was going to ask what we should do about drinking water. That which comes through the pipe just above here is very warm. The hill being so bare is always sunny. I've seen people bringing that other water right along."

Mr. Page turned to Francisco. "You have a horse, then?" he asked.

"Oh, yes; we have two horses. Shall I get my wagon? Will you like the water? I can bring the barrel along for you."

"Very well; go and fetch it," said Mr. Page.

"Oh, father, may I go with him?" pleaded Walter.

"To the spring? Yes; if he is willing to take you," replied his father.

"Yes, I meant to ask. And the little girl maybe, too, if she will," said Francisco.

"Yes, papa; yes, mamma, let me go," Nellie begged.

"Very well," both replied, but Aunt Mary said:

"Don't you think it rather tomboyish, to use a mild word, to go about that way with two boys?"

"One of them is her brother, Aunt Mary," hastily interjected Walter. "Nellie has always played with boys."

"It won't harm the child a bit," said Mr. Page.

Francisco smiled and said:

"The horse is very slow. He cannot hurt. He is an old one, mine. Once he was turned out to die, and I begged for him. So my uncle gave

him. And he helps earn me my living now. When you see him I think you will laugh; but he is very good, as I said, my Rosinante."

"Where did you hear that name?" inquired Aunt Mary.

"A gentleman told me to call that name to my horse. He said there was a story about it—in Spanish."

"Don Quixote," said Aunt Mary pleasantly. "Did you ever hear about it?"

"Only that the bones of a horse were once coming through the skin," replied Francisco. "And so it was with mine. But now he is not so bad. I will go quickly and bring the cart."

Walter looked at his father.

"Yes, go along," said Mr. Page. "Nellie will wait until you come back."

"But about the money—I was forgetting," said Francisco. "Is it too much for every barrel to pay twenty-five cents?"

"Not at all. It is quite reasonable," said Mr. Page.

"There will be perhaps two every week."

"That will be all right."

"Very good," said Francisco.

The two boys left the tent, beginning a lively race with each other at once. Francisco soon outdistanced Walter, but magnanimously refus-

ing to presume on his superior skill, waited for him under an oak tree which stood, beautiful and solitary, in the middle of the road.

"You are a fine runner, Francisco," said Walter, when he arrived.

"I was best at the Mission," the boy replied. "At the Fiestas we always run, and, of the boys, Juan Palos and me—we most always get the prize."

"When do you have the Fiesta?"

"Oh, in October, on the third—the Feast of San Francisco. It is his church, you see. But this year there will not be any, for the people will need to save their money if they must go away to some other place."

"It is too bad that they have to go," said Walter.

"You think it is true, then? there is no hope? What thinks your father?"

"He says they will have to leave. But the government will find them some other place."

"It will be hard," said the boy, "and it is not just. But, if it must be, it must."

"I wish I could see a Fiesta. What do they have?"

"Oh, first Mass and Benediction; and the people are married, and the children get baptized. Afterward they have games, and they

dance. Once, for three years the priest did not come, because they would not give up the gambling."

"Do Indians gamble?" asked Walter, in surprise.

"Oh, yes, they do, and very much. They lose a great deal of money that way. But from the whites they have learned it, I believe."

Walter did not know what reply to make to this assertion, doubtless a true one. They walked at a quick pace till they reached the ruined adobe, Francisco's home, behind which stood the wagon—three or four long, unplaned boards set on four wheels. The horse was grazing some distance away.

"I will catch Rosinante," said Francisco, taking an armful of hay from a pile.

"If you are thirsty there is, inside, a clean cup, and there at the other end, by the tree, an *otla* with water."

Walter felt quite thirsty. Moreover, he was somewhat curious to see the inside of a genuine Indian dwelling. It seemed very dark to him, coming out of the hot, bright sunshine. There was a window facing the door, but every pane of glass was gone. The sill was so wide as to form a very comfortable seat. The thick walls and smooth earthen floor made the place feel very

cool. The room contained very little furniture—two cots, one at either end; in the middle a table, with clean plates, cups and saucers; also a couple of boxes and a pair of broken chairs. The house was almost roofless, save for the withered boughs which had been laid across the broad, irregular openings. Nothing could have been more humble; yet everything was clean and orderly.

Francisco came with Rosinante as Walter was replacing the cup.

"That is very good water," he said.

"The same as you will have to drink," replied Francisco. "See, here is your barrel. I thought it better to take but one. I can change twice a week. Now I will harness Rosinante."

This was soon done; the barrel was placed on the wagon and fastened with a couple of thongs. Walter took his place beside Francisco, and they rattled away, down the hill. Nellie was on the watch; when they reached the tent Francisco and Walter got off and told her to take their place, saying they would drive her up the hill, but that she would have to walk down. "The full barrel of water is quite enough for Rosinante, Francisco says," explained Walter. "Besides, if the thongs that tie the barrel to the wagon should break, it might fall over on you and kill you."

The whole family stood at the door of the large tent to see them off, Nellie gaily waving her hand to them.

"Is there not some danger that they may fall into the boiling spring?" asked Aunt Mary, anxiously, as they passed out of sight.

Aunt Mary was the widow of Mr. Page's uncle. He could not help smiling, occasionally, at her causeless fears.

"I'm afraid you will not enjoy your trip unless you try to be less fearful of accidents," he said. "They are not going in the direction of the hot springs. However, they would not be injured if they did fall in. They could clamber out at once. You must come down with me after a while to see the springs."

"I think I shall wait until Martha is able to go," said Aunt Mary; "perhaps to-morrow. If the odor when one is near is any worse, or even as bad, as the whiffs we get of it here, I should not think people could either drink the water or bathe in it."

"One gets to like it after a while," said Mr. Page. "I have heard that after a sojourn here people can not bear to drink cold water for some time."

"I am already longing for a cool drink," said his wife.

"The children will not be gone very long, I think," rejoined her husband.

The trio were enjoying themselves very much at that moment. Francisco was hailed by several persons with the reminder that their water-barrels were almost empty, and to each demand he replied courteously that he would attend to it. Turning off from the road, they crossed the path which led to the pools, and were soon on a rough, uneven highway, stony and bleak. A few moments brought them to a sharp divide, which they skirted for some distance till they came to a place where the steep sides were worn away by wagon wheels. On the other side of this cañon everything was green and luxuriant, in remarkable contrast to the ground they had just left. A well-worn trail wound in and out among the trees, which grew closer together as they ascended the verdant slope. A tiny stream, seemingly not broader than a silver ribbon, trickled along to meet them.

"Now we are there," said Francisco, at length, pausing under the shade of a magnificent oak tree.

"Isn't it lovely!" cried Nellie, springing from the wagon.

To the left, from a granite boulder, a living stream of water was trickling, forming a minia-

ture pool. Francisco, with great dexterity, steered his wagon beneath the stream in such a position that the water would flow into the upright barrel.

"Let us go now a little while the water is filling, and look about," he said to the children. "It is very pretty here." And so it was.

They climbed up the bank, pushing the fragrant bushes aside, and came suddenly upon a broad plateau of many acres, dotted at intervals with splendid forest trees. In the distance the rugged, blue mountains stretched along the horizon. All was radiant, still, and incomparably lovely.

The children ran about for a time, then seated themselves under one of the massive trees. Presently they heard a crashing noise in the bushes, and a red head appeared. In a moment they saw that it belonged to a boy about Walter's age, a most ungainly and unattractive-looking person. His eyes were small and close together, his teeth uneven and protruding.

"Hello!" he cried as he saw Walter and Nellie; then, catching sight of Francisco, he made a horrible face.

The Indian boy looked at him calmly, but said nothing.

"Hello!" he repeated, throwing himself on the ground beside Walter.

"Hello!" responded Walter, coolly. He did not like the aspect of the newcomer any more than he did his attitude toward Francisco.

"When did you get here?" inquired the red-haired boy, "and how long are you going to stay?"

"We came this morning, and we may stay all summer," replied Walter.

The boy edged nearer him. Francisco got up and walked away, followed by Nellie.

"Isn't he horrid?" she said when they got out of hearing-distance.

"Never mind. I will tell you after," said Francisco, "when he is gone. I do not care what he will say about me. If you like, I will make you a staff. It is easier to walk up and down these hills with one."

"I'd rather you would make one for mamma," said Nellie.

"I will make for her one, too."

"I will make for her one-two," said a mocking voice behind them. "You can't speak English —you can't. Why don't you talk Indian?"

Francisco turned sharply around. Walter and the unwelcome visitor were just behind them, Walter evidently bent on quitting him.

"If I talked Indian you could not understand me," said Francisco, pausing squarely in front of the red-haired tormentor; "but if I knock you down Indian, then perhaps you will understand."

"Oh, boys, don't fight," began Nellie, in alarm. "Papa will never let us come out here again if you do. Please, boys."

"He dasn't fight. He's afraid. He had to promise he wouldn't. His priest won't let him, he won't. He's an old Catholic, he is."

"So are we Catholics," cried Walter, pausing and setting his feet squarely apart. "We *all* are Catholics."

"Like that Indian?" scornfully inquired the other, pointing to Francisco, who now came, with flashing eyes, closer to Walter.

"Yes, like that Indian," Walter replied, unabashed. "Who's meddling with you? Get off here this minute, or I'll make you."

"Boys, boys," pleaded Nellie again, "please don't fight. Let him go."

"I've got as good a right here as any of you old Catholics," sneered their antagonist; but it was noticeable that he gradually backed away as he spoke.

Once more he made a repulsive face; then he began to sing, in a nasal voice:

"Indian, Indian, never die—
Yellow skin and mean eye,
Black——"

He did not finish the stanza. Francisco sprang forward, seized him about the waist, and rolled him down the bank.

"There! Finish your song where no one can hear it but yourself," said the Indian, calmly returning to his companions. Shouts of anger, followed by whimpers of pain, came up from below.

"Oh, Francisco," exclaimed Nellie, "if you haven't hurt him very much, I think I am glad."

"Hurt him!" echoed Walter. "That wouldn't hurt a fly—such an easy setting-down as he got."

"I did not hurt him, and I would not. I was not so angry with him, as that he makes me tired. I do not like to see him where I am. He might have followed us for a long time else."

"But maybe he'll be waiting for us down there to fight," said Nellie.

"No, he will not," answered the Indian boy. "He is a coward. He will go off home as quickly as he can. And then, maybe, some day when I am passing where I can not see him, he will

throw a stone. Oh, I know him very well. What did he say to you, Walter, when we walked away?"

"He said: 'Do you play with *Indians?*'"

"And what did you say?"

"'Go away—no one asked you to come here,' I said. Then I got up and he followed me."

CHAPTER IV.

THE MISSIONARY.

"Ah, the water overflows," said Francisco, as they once more came in sight of the spring. He hurried down the bank, turned the horse round, tightened the thongs holding the barrel so that it would stand firmly on the wagon, and the boys began to retrace their steps.

As soon as they were on level ground again, Francisco, with the reins in his hand, the other two walking beside him, pointed to a frame dwelling a little removed from the others at the top of a little hill.

"You see that house?" he said. "It is where

he lives—that boy. He came last month, with his mother and sister. They tell that the lady is a missionary from India. Have you heard of women doing like that?"

He looked earnestly at the two children, awaiting their reply.

"In the Protestant churches they do send women to far countries as missionaries," rejoined Walter.

"That is funny," replied Francisco, reflectingly. "It may be well, if they are savages in India; but here we do not want them, I think."

"Are they here to convert the Indians?" asked Nellie.

"For the good waters, they say—but maybe, too, for other things. Oh, I tell you, we have plenty of such people in the summer. But they can not hurt very much.

"One day I was going for water, just like now," he continued. "The horse I could not find. After a while I saw this boy riding him bareback, and I said to him: 'You ride pretty well, but it is my horse, and I want him!' But he made one of his faces, and said he would not get off, and called me a dirty Indian. Then I pulled him off, and he struck me. After that I knocked him down, and my uncle came out from the house and said it was wrong to do

so—that it was never known that the Indians quarreled with the whites at the Springs. So then I made my excuse to the boy and promised I would not quarrel again; but my uncle said to him that he must not take my horse again. And then he mocked my uncle; and I was going to hit him, but my uncle held me, and he said: 'Go away, boy. You are not a good boy.' "

"And then what did he do?" asked Walter.

"He put out his tongue, and just as he did so a lady came from around the corner by the church. She stopped and said: 'My son, that is not polite. You must not let the savages teach you how to behave.' "

"I'm sure you got angry again then, didn't you?" said Walter.

"Well, I did, and my uncle a little, too. He spoke for me. He said we were not savages, but Christian people. As he was speaking, that boy had picked up a stone, and, sneaking behind my uncle, he hit him in the back of the head. Once more I was going to fight with him, but my uncle took my arm, and he said: 'Promise me you will not strike that boy, either now or ever!' I promised, and we went away and left them. That is all—except that sometimes, when he sees me, he tries very hard to make me angry."

"He'd better not talk very much to me," said

Walter. "I'm not afraid of him. If I gave him one good lamming, I guess he'd stop."

"You must not *think* of quarreling with him, Walter," said Nellie.

"I sha'n't, if he lets me alone," her brother replied. "But if he turns out to be a nagger, I'll settle him, once and for all."

"Would you like to see the *Lavenderia?*" asked Francisco, as a company of Indian women passed them with huge bundles thrown across their shoulders.

"What is that?" Nellie inquired.

"What you call washing-house—laundry," replied the boy. "They are going now to wash. All day long, from early, early morning, they come. For so it must be. They have to wash the clothes, but all cannot do it at once; so one week a few come in the early morning, and others later; and the next week the late ones come first. But always, except on Sunday, until night they are washing."

"Shall we leave the water here and go now?" asked Nellie.

"I think not," replied Francisco. "It is better first to leave the water at your camp; then you can sit on the wagon again, and your brother and I will walk beside."

"Let's hurry up, then," said Nellie. "I just

love to watch those women as they trot along. But why don't the men help them carry those heavy bundles."

Francisco regarded her for a moment with astonishment.

"Carry clothes to the wash?" he said. "It is not men's work—that."

Nellie did not reply. She was not going to quarrel with Francisco. But in her kind little heart she thought the noble Indian wanting in chivalry to the weaker sex.

Everyone at the camp was glad to see them; they had been gone exactly an hour and a half.

"You can't make an Indian hurry," Charlie had said when Mrs. Page began to grow uneasy. "Nothing can happen to the young folk; the boy is all right, and they're nothing but children."

Franscico led the horse to the back of the large tent, and with Charlie's assistance placed the barrel under the pepper tree; a gourd-dipper was produced from Charlie's countless stores, and everyone had a drink of the delightful, cool water.

"If you will take a piece of cheese-cloth," said Francisco, "and, running a string through, tie it around the top of the barrel, wetting it always, it will keep cool the water, and the flies away."

"A very good idea, Francisco," said Aunt Mary, preparing to go in search of the cheese-cloth, needle, and tape, at once.

"And now, if we may, I will take them to see the *Lavenderia*," said the Indian boy. "They wish to look at the washing going on."

"I don't care so much for it, but Nellie does," said Walter.

"You do so—every bit as much as I do—Walter," rejoined Nellie. "Only you think it's like a girl to go and see them washing."

"No; it isn't that," said Walter, when everybody had finished laughing. "But maybe they won't like our looking at them."

"They are probably used to it by this time," said Mr. Page. "People have been watching them for many years."

Up and down the hills they clattered briskly once more with the wagon, Rosinante doing her best to make a record for speed, with Nellie behind her. When they reached the top of the hill above the first spring, they left the wagon and scrambled down the steep, rocky pathway. At some little distance from the others, a separate pool for washing had been roofed over very picturesquely. It reminded one of old pictures of Hygeian temples. The sides were open, allowing the looker-on to see the washerwomen, squat-

ting on their heels, soaping the clothes or leaning over the steaming water. Young and old, to the number of perhaps a dozen, they worked and chattered, apparently altogether oblivious of those who regarded them.

Flat granite slabs served them for washboards. Vigorously, indeed, did they ply their arms. Some were rinsing, a few wringing out, and others spreading the garments, white as snow, either on the ground or on the straggling bushes in the vicinity.

"I could watch them forever," said Nellie, when Walter, having made a little journey around the place with Francisco, told her he thought they should be going campward. "I'm going to ask mamma to let me come down here to-morrow and wash some napkins."

"Would they allow her to wash there?" asked Walter.

"Yes, if she would like; anyone can," said Francisco. "But always, I think, the white people come about from ten to twelve in the morning."

"Oh, I wouldn't like that," said Nellie. "I want to go with the Indians and wash."

"Maybe you can do that, too," said Francisco. "Some time, when my cousin Leonidas is coming, I will ask that you may go along."

"You must not forget it, Francisco," said Nellie, reluctantly tearing herself away.

"Hi! hi! Chrysantha!" called Francisco to an old woman who waved her hand at them as they passed. Then he said something in Spanish. The old woman spoke to her companions. They all laughed merrily, nodding pleasantly to the children, and the old woman called out something several times to Francisco.

"What do they mean? What is she saying?" asked Nellie, looking back at them shyly.

"They are telling me you will be welcome to wash with them whenever you wish," said the boy. "They like you."

Arrived at the tent, Nellie admitted that she was tired. But Walter begged to be allowed to go back on the wagon with Francisco, who had to fetch some eggs to a lady in the village and draw some more water before evening.

Rosinante jogging leisurely along, they soon came in sight of the old adobe. The figure of a woman standing in the rear of the church at once attracted the attention of Francisco.

"It is the missionary lady!" he exclaimed. "It is the mother of William. She has come to say something about what has happened. How I wish she would stay away!"

The woman came forward to meet them. She

was smiling; evidently she had not yet had an interview with her hopeful son.

The boys exchanged glances. Francisco breathed more freely.

"I am pleased to see that you are in a better humor to-day," she said sweetly. "And who is your companion?"

"My name is Walter Page," was the response. "I live in San Diego."

"Oh, do you? I have a dear friend there—the Reverend Mr. Binder. At present he is not serving any church. Like myself, he has been a missionary, and his health failed. Perhaps you have met him, my boy."

"I don't know any ministers," said Walter, rather brusquely. "We go to the Catholic church."

The lady's face grew more stern. She looked from one boy to the other.

"You never go to Sunday-school, then," she said in regretful tones, but as if stating an undeniable fact.

"I go every Sunday," said Walter.

"Does your priest allow it?"

"He teaches us," rejoined Walter.

"That must be something new—something entirely new."

Walter made no reply.

"It was my purpose, in coming here, to establish a Sunday-school," the missionary continued, true to her avocation. "I saw this boy and marked him," pointing to Francisco. "He looked intelligent, as though the others might follow his lead. But unfortunately he got into an altercation with my son, and I have taken no further steps with him."

Walter looked down, embarrassed upon hearing himself addressed personally. He hoped she was not going to ask him to be a leader. He would in that case tell her something, he now thought.

"It is difficult, very difficult, to accomplish anything. The mothers and fathers are indifferent, if not rude—the children the same."

Neither of the boys made a reply.

"The teacher tells me she has been here twelve years," went on the missionary, after waiting in vain for a remark. Her voice now began to lose its sweet accents and to savor of asperity.

"Twelve years—and she has not been able to make any impression—in a Christian way. She thinks you are all very good, but you cling to your old beliefs."

"And why not, please?" asked Francisco. "Why should we not keep to our own faith?

Why do they give us teachers who are not of our religion? How many go there to that school?" pointing to the building, not far away. "Maybe twenty out of seventy-five children. To the Mission go the others, where they belong——"

"I think it is very cruel in the priests to insist on sending those children nearly a hundred miles from their parents to the Mission," said William's mother, growing warmer with every word.

"And the Indians think it is *right—right* to send them to the Mission, where they will learn their religion," answered Francisco with equal warmth. "The teacher is very good and kind, and the people are grateful to her for all she does, but if she should stay here twelve years longer, they will never give up what the Fathers have taught them."

"It is well, it is very well, my poor child," rejoined the missionary, compassionately, "that all whom she does teach are not so high-tempered as you are. What a time there would be in the school!"

"Why do you not leave us alone?" cried Francisco. "Do we trouble you? Do we try to make Catholics of you who come to our home here? Why do you not leave us alone?"

Walter was alarmed. He looked at his companion in surprise. The missionary drew back.

"Do not become violent," she said. "In India the natives were at least respectful. I wonder that your parents are not more careful of you than they are," she went on, turning to Walter. "They should not allow you to associate with such a rude person."

The boy's cheek flushed; he turned away without replying.

"Come, Francisco," he said in a low tone, pulling his companion by the sleeve. "Come; let us go into the house."

"I do not wonder you should wish to go away, my boy. You are probably ashamed of the conduct of your friend. I hope, at least, that you are."

"I am not ashamed," said Walter. "Neither of us is. We have no reason to be ashamed."

"You have been badly brought up," continued their tormentor. "You have been badly brought up—very badly."

They waited to hear no more, but walked quietly onward until they found shelter within the crumbling doorway of the brown, smoky adobe.

CHAPTER V.

AT CHURCH.

TRUE to his Indian nature, Francisco made no further allusion to the episode with the missionary. After unharnessing Rosinante, he began searching for eggs. When he and Walter had found a couple of dozen, he placed them in an old tin pail and said:

"I will let the horse rest now for an hour, and then I must go to the spring for a barrel of water again. But first, if you like to come with me, I will take these eggs to the lady that lives in the doctor's house."

"Have you a doctor here?" asked Walter.

"Not now," Francisco hastened to say. "But once, for three years, we had. There was also a woman they called a matron to teach our women to sew and keep house. How funny that was—how funny! They would not give us our own teachers—the Sisters, or some Catholics. They sent us a teacher—who is kind, but who hates the Catholic religion—and another man and woman, the doctor and matron, who had nothing at all to do to earn their good salary of seventy-five dollars a month. It was *too*

plain—that fraud—my uncle said, and so they took them away. But altogether they cost as much as would have kept *ten* sisters in the place."

They were passing the church now, and Walter said:

"See, Francisco, the window is open. It was not when my father and Nellie and I came up this morning."

"You did not open it?" asked the Indian boy, setting down his pail.

"No, indeed," replied Walter. "We would not do such a thing."

"It is kept always shut—the church," said Francisco. "I must look in."

He leaned across the sill; then, after lightly vaulting over, he said:

"Who has done this?"

"What?" eagerly inquired Walter, following him.

Francisco pointed to the walls. At regular intervals, where the stations are usually hung, colored scriptural prints had been placed, each fastened with a large pin, as they were unframed. They were scenes from the New Testament, in themselves rather pretty, and not inappropriate as illustrations of texts of Scripture.

"They are pretty, but they are not suitable for the stations," said Walter.

"I think it must be the missionary woman who has done this," said Francisco. "I will not take them down. I will ask some older person to do so. Perhaps my uncle will be home for Sunday. She did not do it for good, I am sure."

"Perhaps she did, Francisco," said Walter. "We ought not to be too hard on her."

"Maybe; but I know them. We shall see. Anyhow, it is not right for her to come into the church by the window like a thief. She knew very well, I think, that we would not want her to hang her pictures around."

Closing the window again, Francisco took up his pail of eggs. The boys parted under the old oak, Walter fearing his father and mother would not like him to remain away longer.

He learned that his mother had taken her first hot bath and was feeling "quite well," she said. The older people were very much interested in his recital of the encounter with the missionary, but reproved Walter for having answered her as he had done.

"But, papa," he said, "I couldn't help it. I had to say something, and I wasn't going to give in to her by acting as if we were wrong

or that I was ashamed of being a Catholic. You would not have wished me to do that."

There was reason in his argument the elders admitted. His father added, however, that it was always better to steer clear of such persons if possible.

And so the day, so full of incident, closed. Supper was hardly over before the tired children went to rest.

So day succeeded day in this primitive mountain village. The children gradually became acquainted with the Indians, who were very kind to them. Nellie now went regularly to the *Lavenderia* with handkerchiefs and napkins, and the Indian women willingly made a place for her. They laughingly watched her attempts at washing, which was generally accomplished for her by one or another of them in the end. The gold medal of the Immaculate Conception, which she wore attached to a thin chain around her neck, was the sign of a bond of kinship between them.

On Sunday morning at eight o'clock the sweet, pure tones of the church-bell rang out upon the air, sounding singularly beautiful through the clear, still atmosphere.

"There will not be Mass to-day, Walter?" inquired Mr. Page of his son, whose intimacy

with Francisco he thought warranted him well posted in the affairs of the village.

"No, sir," was the reply. "If Mauricio, Francisco's uncle, has returned, he will say the prayers, and if he hasn't, someone else will."

"We must go, at any rate," said his father. "It will be, I imagine, both devotional and interesting to assist at the prayers."

Mrs. Page was unable to walk so far. Aunt Mary, glad of an excuse for avoiding close proximity to the Indians, toward whom she had an aversion which she could not conquer, decided to remain at home to keep her company.

From all directions groups of Indians—the women and children cleanly, if gaudily, attired —were wending their way to the church. The last bell began to ring as they climbed the steep elevation on top of which it stood. The people sat around the entrance; on the ground several very old women were crouched, motionless and patient.

Francisco came from the inside and opened wide the door. The congregation poured in— the men on one side, the women on the other. Nearly all the latter had shawls over their heads, few being without a tinge of red in their costumes. After Francisco had lighted two candles on the altar, an old woman left her place

and went forward, kneeling on the steps of the little sanctuary. She recited the Rosary in Spanish, the people responding in low but distinct and reverent tones. After she had said one decade, she began another, reversing the prayers, saying the "Holy Mary," first, the people answering with the "Hail, Mary." The third decade was repeated in the usual manner, the fourth like the second. At the fifth, instead of praying as before, she lowered her voice to a sweet, monotonous chant.

"*Dios te salve, Maria,*" she sang, and the others answered in the same fashion, "*Santa Maria, Madre de Dios,*" till the decade was ended. It was all very strange and beautiful; the sweet voices of the dark-skinned worshipers, deprived of their priests and teachers, coming Sunday after Sunday thus to preserve and perpetuate the services of their religion. Other prayers, also in Spanish, were said, and the old woman returned to her place.

Francisco was about to extinguish the candles, when the door of the sacristy opened, and a tall, finely-formed Indian, about fifty years of age, issued forth. The boy stepped aside; the newcomer advanced to the railing. His sharp eyes seemed to rest at once upon the pictures which had been placed on the walls during the pre-

ceding week. He addressed the people in Spanish; then, pointing to the pictures, asked in English:

"Who can tell the person who has hung those pictures around the walls of the church?"

No one answered. The Indians, whispering among themselves, made various gestures of disapproval.

"You will all see that although they are very good pictures," he continued, "they are not for our church. We do not need them. We have here already the Sacred Hearts of Our Lord and His Mother; a kind lady would have given us also the stations, but for the removal which we must soon make from this—our home."

Here those of his hearers who understood English—all the younger people and many of the others—made sorrowful gestures. Some of them uttered a peculiar wailing sound.

"It will be now our duty to find who has put those pictures where they are, and give them back to the person who placed them."

Then, as if struck by a sudden thought, the Indian turned to Francisco.

"Have you loaned the key to someone this week?" he inquired.

"No, uncle," replied the boy, "I have not given it to anyone; but somebody has come in

through the window: one day I found it open." So saying, he glanced toward the door where some white persons were seated.

At this point a woman arose and stepped about midway up the aisle.

"The missionary lady," whispered Walter to his father. "Now there will be a fuss."

"I wish to state," said the woman, in tones that could be distinctly heard all through the church, "I wish to state that *I* placed those *beautiful* pictures where they are. I intended to offer them to the person whom they call 'the priest,' hoping that he would hang them for the benefit of the congregation, wherever he pleased. Hearing he was absent, I took the liberty of entering, and pinning them above the crosses, which *I* consider superstitious emblems."

"Francisco," said the tall Indian, "remove from the wall those pictures, and give them to the lady.

"Pedro," he continued, addressing a boy close by, "you take down on one side, so that it will be quicker."

"But, my good man," began the missionary, "if you do not wish to let them stay where they are, at least keep them and hang them where you will."

"We thank you, madam, for your kindness,"

said the Indian, "but we do not, as I said, need them. We have already our own."

Francisco and Pedro with lightning celerity had already removed the unwelcome prints and were offering them to the would-be donor. Reluctantly receiving them, she went slowly back to her seat, near the door, followed by glances from the Indians which would have alarmed Aunt Mary.

When the congregation dispersed, the members found the missionary awaiting them at the threshold. She proffered them the pictures as they came out, but the Indians rejected them. Some looked at her stolidly and passed on as though they did not see her; others merely shook their heads, but not one accepted a picture. Mr. Page, with his children, had stopped near the entrance, wishing to speak to Francisco's uncle.

"Tell me, sir," said the "missionary lady," "why these people refuse the prints I have offered them? They should, it seems to me, be very grateful, instead of rejecting them in so surly a manner. I confess they are a mystery to me."

"Probably they were not pleased with your methods," replied Mr. Page, coldly. "You never see Catholics forcing their beliefs or customs on Protestants in this manner."

"I forgot, sir, that you were likely to be one of them," replied the amiable missionary, darting a glance of displeasure at Walter, who stood beside his father. The incident ended her missionary labors in the village of the Cupeños. Thenceforward she transferred her efforts to other fields, farther from home. But the consequences were more far-reaching than anyone could have foreseen.

Mr. Page waited until Francisco came out, followed by his uncle.

"This is my uncle," said the boy. "These are good Catholics," he continued, pointing to the group.

The Indian extended his hand.

"I came to-day a little late," he said, "but not *too* late, I think, to make one more person see that we do not want their tracts or their pictures or their preachings. They may do what they will, but we are Catholics to the end—except, perhaps, some few who find later they would have been better off to remain as they were. Did any of our people take pictures?"

"Not one," said Mr. Page. "It was quite interesting to see how utterly they ignored them."

"That is good," murmured Mauricio. "That finished it."

"I wanted to ask," said Mr. Page, while the children strolled slowly away together, "why they say the Rosary in that way, reversing the prayers at every other decade, and why they finish it in a chant. It is very odd, but exceedingly beautiful."

"I believe they change the prayers as they do because in the beginning the Fathers found it helped them in teaching the 'Hail, Mary,' and 'Holy Mary.' You see, when the Father said always the *'Dios te salve,'* or, the 'Hail, Mary,' as you call it, the people did not learn it so well as when they said it themselves. And for the chanting—that was like a hymn at the end."

"I see," said Mr. Page. "And I think you did exactly as you should have done with regard to that officious woman. I am glad to have my children know your nephew. He is a good boy, and very bright. You ought to be proud of him."

"So far he is very good," rejoined Mauricio. "He is also very smart for one who has not been long at school. We have some land here; together we make a living, with what we get from the visitors. One of those houses over there belongs to me. In the summer I lease it; in the winter we go back to it again. But this

will end soon. There is no more hope for us; we must go."

"It seems to be inevitable," said Mr. Page.

"It is sad for all of us, but worse for the old people. Some of them will not believe it. Some of them say they will not go, but will lie down and die on the roadside. It is very sad. Next week there is to be a *Junta.* But what good will that do?"

"What do you mean by a *Junta?*" inquired Mr. Page, who was not familiar with Spanish.

"A meeting of the Indians and the white men who have been appointed to find another place for us. But I can not see what good it will do."

"Perhaps the Indians can then say what place they would prefer."

"That, they will never say, I am sure," said Mauricio. "They want no home but this."

Three or four boys now appeared above the slope of the hill. William, in the lead, had a gun in his hand.

"We've been driving rabbits," he said as they passed. "Some day we'll have better luck—and it won't be long, either—driving the Indians away from Warner's."

"You are a very rude boy," said Mr. Page.

"I'm not an old *Catholic,*" sneered the

urchin, filliping a small stone directly at Mauricio, who made a step forward.

"We have a *cuartel** here, youngster," he said. "For a long time it has been empty; we are a peaceful people. But we can have unruly persons put into that *cuartel* if we wish. Be careful, youngster; be careful."

The threat seemed to be effectual. The boys hurried down the hill. Bidding Mauricio and Francisco good-day, Mr. Page and his children walked slowly homeward.

CHAPTER VI.

DIONYSIO AND MARGARITA.

THE Pages had noticed a good-looking Indian boy, perhaps eighteen or nineteen years of age, riding about on a fine horse. He wore a dark blue uniform trimmed with red; his hat was of good Mexican straw; he wore also a stiff white shirt-collar. This boy seemed to live on horseback. He was always alone. Either he held aloof from the others, or they did not care for his company.

* Jail.

"Who is that?" asked Walter of Francisco one morning as they were arranging the water-barrel under the pepper tree.

Francisco looked around.

"Oh, that is Arturo, the son of Juan Pablo," he said.

"And who is Juan Pablo?"

"The rich man of Cupa," answered Francisco. "He owns many houses here. He married the daughter of the old Captain."

"What Captain?"

"That is how we call the chief," said Francisco. "Juan Pablo is not a Cupa Indian, but he has lived here since he was a child. Arturo is his son."

"And that is why he is better dressed than the others, and goes riding about by himself?"

"Oh, no. Formerly he was not deemed any better than others—nor was he different. That is the uniform of Carlisle he wears. He goes to school now at Carlisle."

"Do you mean Carlisle, Pennsylvania?" asked Mr. Page, who had been listening to the conversation from where he sat reading under the *ramada.*

"Yes; he was one of those who went to the schoolhouse on the hill. The teacher thought he was a very smart boy, and she talked and

talked with his father to let him go to the Indian school at Carlisle. He comes home during the vacation, and is too fine for the others. At least, that is what they say. I have found him well enough. I think it is the others who imagine he is different."

"What will he do when his schooldays are over?" inquired Mr. Page.

Francisco shrugged his shoulders.

"That I can not tell," he said. "There was Adriana. She, too, went to Carlisle. She had only her mother. When she came back to Cupa she was unhappy. She could not bear the life here after having bathtubs lined with white porcelain at Carlisle."

Mr. Page laughed.

"Is that what she said?" he asked.

"Oh, yes; that and many other things. Two years she was at Carlisle without coming back. Her mother was very poor—living in a brush-house that summer, as always, renting her own adobe for the season that she might have something for the winter. Adriana cried all the time. The next year she did not come back, nor the next. When it was time for school to be over, she wrote that she would stay in Philadelphia. Then her mother died—of sorrow."

"And what became of Adriana?"

"Who can tell that? No one knows. She has not written."

"Are there any others?" asked Mr. Page.

"Well, there is Dionysio, who will fetch you the wood to-day. He can tell you what he thinks of the Indian school at Carlisle."

Mr. Page had become interested, Walter and Nellie equally so. When the wood arrived they found the driver of the wagon an intelligent-looking youth about the age of Arturo, perhaps a little older.

"They tell me you have been a student at Carlisle," said Mr. Page after he had paid him.

"Yes, sir. I spent four years there," replied the boy, very politely.

"Of what benefit has it been to you?" inquired Mr. Page.

"No benefit, that I can see," was the reply.

"Has it made you discontented?"

"At first—yes; but not now. I am satisfied."

"What do you do for your living?"

"What they all do."

"Laboring work, you mean?"

"Laboring work — harvesting, ploughing, grape picking—any thing that I can do."

"What advantage, then, is your having been at Carlisle?"

"None. There they teach us many things,

but seldom can an Indian get work in the large cities. A white man is always given the first chance; that is natural. I learned wood-carving. Perhaps if I went far away and waited long I might have been able to work at my trade; but my old grandfather and grandmother were alone here with my little sister. How could I stay away from them? So here I am, and here I will stay. It is my home; I like it best."

"It is well that you look at it in that way if it must be so. It appears to me there are hundreds of thousands uselessly spent in the Indian schools every year."

"That is very true," said the young man. "How much better to have them on the reservations, where are all the people together, where all could help each other and learn from each other. What a fertile soil is this, for instance. How much could be done here! There are many places like this. But now—it is a bad job, a very bad job."

"I agree with you," said Mr. Page. "It is a *very* bad job."

"I tell you," said the boy, "there are three kinds of Indians who come from those schools. One is ashamed of his people and will not live with them any longer. There is not much for

him to do anywhere, so he rambles about from place to place. The whites despise him; for his own people he has lost all his good heart. He dies after awhile, always a sot and a thief. There is another kind of Indian. He is discontented because he has been out in the world that does not want him. He comes back and remains with his people; but what he has seen and done when away makes him not content with his home. Always there is sorrow in his heart while he lives. If they had not taken him away from his home he would have remained content. Do I not say right—according to your belief?"

"Yes," said Mr. Page, "you do."

"And there is still another kind—the lazy one who comes home and sneers at everything, and yet is too lazy to go away and look for something better. Pretty soon he gets lower than those at whom he laughs and sneers. He lives on the labor of his women—his mother, a sister, or wife, when he gets one—until he dies. You cannot change the Indian; if you attempt it you spoil him."

Mr. Page was surprised at the extraordinary good sense of the young man.

"You have a wise head on your shoulders," he said. "I do not wonder that with very good

intentions, perhaps, they selected you for Carlisle. At any rate, they have taught you to reason."

"To reason!" echoed Dionysio, with a flash of the eye and contemptuous curl of the lip that betrayed the latent deep Indian nature. "The Indian could reason long before he ever saw the face of the white man—and can do it to-day better than his teachers. I am not very old, but that much I have seen and I know."

"I believe you are right again," said Mr. Page. "I should like to talk with you some other time."

"Thank you," said Dionysio. "It will also give me pleasure."

That evening the children took a walk with their father and mother in search of eggs. They were directed to a dilapidated brush-house at some distance from their camping place. It was said the eggs there were particularly large and fresh. They could not find it at first and went considerably out of their way. At length they came to the place, the most forlorn-looking dwelling they had yet seen. It was quite extensive, however, open on three sides, and with a hole in the roof for ascending smoke from a bare fireplace. Two heaps of ragged and dirty bed-clothing lay close to the smouldering coals.

A little farther away, almost out of sight, was a cot. An old man lay on one heap of rags, an old woman crouched near the fire. A little girl, very pretty but very dirty, with beautiful large brown eyes and long black hair, sat near the old woman, still as a statue. They all seemed to be asleep.

"Have you any eggs to sell?" asked Mr. Page.

The old woman rose from the ground. She was crippled, and appeared bent nearly double. She called her husband, who with great labor also got up from his heap of rags. The child, seeing the bucket in Walter's hand, cried out in Spanish:

"*Huevos, huevos!*"* The old people screamed at each other in a *patois* of Spanish and Indian, principally the latter. Then the child, in obedience to some words from the grandmother, asked, "How many?" "A couple of dozen," was the reply. The little one disappeared into the darkness in the rear of the dwelling, faintly illumined by the dying fire.

She presently issued forth, carrying the eggs in her apron. She counted them into the pail, and Mr. Page placed a quarter in her hand. The old woman snatched it eagerly from the

* Eggs.

child and thrust it into a bag which she took from her bosom. Nothing could have been more squalid or uncomfortable than the hut, nothing more unlovely than the inhabitants with the exception of the child, whose beauty and innocence neither dirt nor squalor could destroy.

The old man began to busy himself with the fire, throwing some brush upon it, while his wife produced a blackened coffee-pot from one corner and put it on the coals. They gave no more attention to their visitors than as if they did not exist.

"One would think they did not know we were here," said Walter.

"Probably they mean that we should go," suggested his father. "Now that we have the eggs there is no excuse for our staying."

"I wish we could have that cute little thing to live with us," said Nellie. "She is not so very dark. I would like her for a little playmate, mamma."

"She is very attractive," said her mother. "What a pity she must live in a hovel like this." They turned to go, when a young man entered from the outside. It was Dionysio.

"Good-evening," he replied to Mr. Page's salutation. "Were you looking for me?"

"No," replied Mr. Page, "we were not look-

ing for you, but we are glad to see you. We have been purchasing eggs from these old people. I am told they have an excellent lot of fowls. Perhaps you are on the same errand."

"I!" exclaimed the boy; "I live here—these are my grandfather and grandmother—and my little sister," he added, as the child glided to his side.

Mrs. Page regarded him sadly.

"You are thinking, madam," said the Indian boy, "that it is a poor place—and so it is. But in the winter we are a little better off. Ours is yonder adobe house. My grandparents are too old and my sister too little to do much work. I must be away working whenever I can."

"What is your sister's name?" inquired Mrs. Page. "She is a lovely child."

"She is called Margarita," said the boy. "She is fond of her brother."

"Mamma," whispered Nellie, "ask him to let her come and play with me."

Mrs. Page did not reply. The child was in her present condition not a possible companion for her own.

Dionysio had heard the whisper, and instantly divining what was in the mind of Mrs. Page, he said:

"You see that she is neglected; but what can

I do? My grandmother is very queer. She will not allow the little one to go to the school on the hill because the teacher is not Catholic, and she will not send her to the Mission for then Margarita will be away so far. She does not let her from her side. What can I do?"

"That is true; you can do nothing," said Mrs. Page. "But perhaps some day——"

"Yes, when they die—the old people, you mean," continued Dionysio in the most matter-of-fact tone. "Then I shall send her to the Mission. But while they live it must be as they say. I hope you will like the eggs; we have them always very good."

He made way for them to pass, a courteous smile upon his lips, his little sister clinging to his hand.

A few days after this, when Alfonsa, the old woman who had said prayers in the church, and who had since undertaken to do the family washing, came for the clothes she said:

"There has been a death in the night. The grandmother of Dionysio is gone. She was eighty-five. But many have lived longer. The grandfather is ninety."

"How good of that boy to be so kind and work so hard for them," remarked Mrs. Page.

"They are not so poor, maybe," rejoined Al-

fonsa. "With a vineyard and a little ranch, and the old woman always with chickens and eggs—they are not so poor, maybe."

"What will become of the little one?" inquired Mrs. Page.

"Who can tell? Some one will take her. Dionysio can stay with the old man."

"Couldn't *we* have her, mother?" asked Nellie. "She is so sweet."

"What would you do with her, child?" inquired Aunt Mary.

"Love her and have her for a little playmate," said Nellie.

"Well, well! Who ever heard the like!" exclaimed Aunt Mary.

"But she is *so* sweet," repeated Nellie. "Let us have her, mother."

Alfonsa smiled at Nellie and went off with the clothes.

Nellie still persisted in her pleading. Mr. Page was reading within hearing distance. He now looked up from his paper and said to his wife:

"Martha, since we came to California you have not had an orphan to care for. Before that there were always one or two."

"Yes, that is so," agreed his wife. "Some one would die, or some waif would come along

and we would keep them till a home was provided."

"Suppose you take the little Indian," said her husband. "I am greatly interested in the boy. He and I have a chat nearly every day. We might be able to give *him* some kind of a chance also. If I buy that ranch up at Poway he could be of use there."

"What do you wish me to do—not to take the child into the family as one of us, surely?"

"Oh, no, not exactly; but we could take her in now, and later send her to the Mission, or perhaps to school in town. If she is anything like her brother she will become a help to you some day."

Nellie listened with sparkling eyes.

"Yes, do, mamma; do, do!" she begged.

"Well, I am willing to try it," said the mother. "That is, if her brother consents, and we can get her thoroughly washed and combed and clothed before we bring her here. How is that to be done?"

"Alfonsa will do it," cried Nellie. "She has the *cleanest* house, mother—the *cleanest*—and you see how neat she looks."

"Well, we can ask her after we have seen Dionysio," said her mother.

It was trying for Nellie to wait until they

laid the old woman away on the hillside, where the Indians bury their dead.

Alfonsa was first approached with regard to the child. "Yes," she said, she would take the little one gladly; "and scrub and comb her every day for a week till she is clean enough to bring under the roof of the good, kind lady."

"But will the brother give her to us?" asked Mrs. Page.

"If he is wise, he will," said Alfonsa. "And he has always been wise."

Dionysio was pleased. His eyes brightened when the subject was broached to him.

"But she is not clean," he said. "I could not bring her to you as she is."

The talk with Alfonsa was then repeated. Dionysio had no objection to make, and Margarita herself was willing. A week of "quarantine," as Mr. Page humorously referred to it, and one morning Dionysio made his appearance, leading his sister by the hand. She wore a clean blue calico dress, and a red ribbon in her neatly braided hair. Her face was radiant, and when Mrs. Page approached, she at once went forward and placed one little brown hand in hers.

"I have never seen her do like that," said the boy. "She is so shy."

"I have come to live with you," said the child, gazing frankly around the tent till her glance included every member of the family.

"And you are welcome, my dear," said Aunt Mary, disarmed of her reserve and prejudice, much to the surprise of everybody. She said afterward that no one could have resisted such a charming face and manner. From that moment her subjugation was complete, and Margarita attached herself with equal affection to the kindly, if peculiar, old aunt. In a few days the child had adapted herself to all the ways of her new friends. Her amiable disposition and willingness to wait upon everybody soon endeared her to all the family. Nellie petted and caressed her—it did not seem to spoil her. She slept on a rug in the larger tent, wrapped in a blanket, and curled up like a kitten. It was as though the little orphan had always lived among them.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PEDLAR.

"COMALONG! Alcomout!"

"Comalong! Alcomout!"

Loud and shrill came the nasal tones accom-

panied by the sharp ringing of a little bell. The children rushed from the tent. It was just after breakfast.

A square, black-covered wagon, with a very high seat, on which was perched an odd-looking little man with grizled, curling hair, had stopped outside.

"Oh, I thought it was an Indian!" exclaimed Walter. "You're not an Indian, are you?"

"Think not," replied the little man, pleasantly but tersely. "I'm a Portugee—a long time away from my own country. Why you think me an Indian, young man?"

"That foreign language you speak," replied Walter. "I thought it was Indian."

" 'Foreign language?' " said the man, laughing merrily. "That's English."

"What was it?" asked Walter.

"Comalong—alcomout. I've said it so often I guess it don't sound just right; but I'll do it better for you, so you can understand it. I'll say it slow: Come—along—all—come—out. Do you know what it is now?"

"Oh, yes; that's easy enough," said Walter. "What have you got in your wagon?"

"Everything—calico, muslin, flannel, shoes, stockings, shirts, pots, pans, perfume, ribbons, laces—everything."

He had descended from his perch, and was opening the door of his wagon. It was very neatly arranged inside. The various articles of merchandise were placed separate and in order. With great good nature, the man began exhibiting his wares.

"Here," he said, taking a couple of calico dresses from a box in which they had been neatly folded, "here are two pretty frocks, if you have a little girl. I'll sell 'em cheap. You see they're not the latest style, so we can't very well dispose of them in this fashionable part of the world."

"That's all right," said Aunt Mary. "We may not be so particular. We have a little girl here whom they may fit. Come, 'Rita; let us see."

The child came at her bidding, looking eagerly into the pasteboard box.

"Ho, hello!" said the pedlar, in surprise. "What have we here? Isn't this the little girl of the Barco's? Isn't this Dionysio's sister?"

"Yes," replied Walter. "She lives with us now. Her grandmother is dead."

"Are you going to keep her?"

"For a while at least," replied Aunt Mary.

"That is good—for her, very good," said the pedlar, slowly. Then he added: "That child is a relation of my wife's."

"Is your wife an Indian?" asked Aunt Mary.

"Oh, yes; she is an Indian—and a very good Indian. Pretty, too, like the little girl. I would have taken the child—Dionysio knows it."

"Have you no children of your own?" asked Aunt Mary.

"No; but we would be very good to this one. Perhaps you will not like to keep her always."

"I can not say. For the present she remains with us."

'Rita had climbed up on the wagon wheel, and was pulling the boxes about.

"She knows where to look for the candy," said the pedlar, producing a box of gum-drops.

The two little dresses were purchased by Aunt Mary, as well as some other small articles for the child's use. A pair of shoes and some stockings were included.

"You will find it hard to get her to wear shoes," said the pedlar. "She has never had a pair on her feet."

"I will try to get a pair that is quite large," said Aunt Mary. "She must become used to them gradually, of course."

When all the purchases had been made, the pedlar said:

"I'll be around here again in a couple of

days; if you need anything else, you can get it. I camp up there above the springs."

"Do you sleep in your tent?" asked Walter.

"When it is cold I sleep in the wagon; when it is warm I have my cot. See?"

Looking underneath the wagon they saw a cot strapped to the outer floor. A number of cooking utensils hung from various hooks. There was also a camp stove and portable oven—everything necessary for comfort.

"When I strike a place like this where there is a restaurant I don't cook for myself, but often I am miles from a settlement when night comes. Then I *must* cook for myself or starve."

He prepared to depart, but before he went on his way he raised Margarita in his arms and whispered something in her ear.

"No," replied the child, shaking her head.

*"Dulces?"** he said, pointing to the box of candy.

"No," she said, *"muchas aqui."*†

Aunt Mary did not like his actions. "What did he say?" she inquired, but Margarita had not yet sufficient knowledge of English to explain.

The new dresses were tried on; they fitted

* Sweets.

† "Plenty here."

very well, and the child was delighted. When Dionysio came they told him about the pedlar.

"I saw him just now," he said. "He was scolding me because I would not give 'Rita to him. He says my grandmother promised, but I do not believe it. If so, she did not know what she was saying. Anyhow, she had not the right."

"He says you are cousins of his wife," said Mr. Page.

"Oh, yes; but what is that? All are cousins here. His wife is not a good woman; she is drunk many times, though he is well enough himself. He thinks if she had the child, his wife would be better, but I do not believe it."

Margarita had been listening attentively. She went up to her brother, put her hand in his and said in Spanish:

"Hernando told me he would give me pretty clothes if I would go home with him, and I said the lady had given me some. He said I could every day have candy, but I told him we had plenty here. I do not want to go with Hernando."

"And you shall not go, Margarita," promised her brother. "You shall not go."

All that day the pedlar's bell could be heard through the valley; the children met him in

their rambles several times, but he did not come to their camp again.

The following morning, as they were preparing to go with Francisco for water, he passed them.

"Are you going away for good now?" inquired Walter.

"Yes, until fall at least," said the pedlar. "I have sold nearly all my things. I am off to San Jacinto for more."

His horses trotted off briskly, and the team was soon out of sight. According to their usual custom the children remained some time at the cold spring. Nellie and 'Rita strolled from place to place, looking for "sour-grass"; the boys lay in the shade of one of the large trees.

"Ay! ay!" shouted Francisco, after they had been there quite a while. "It is time."

"Ay! ay!" repeated a mocking voice. "It is time."

"That's William again," said Francisco. "We have not seen him for long, but now he is here."

There was a crashing through the bushes, and the form of their enemy appeared. He was whirling a dead rattlesnake on the point of a stick. Much to their surprise, he neither paused nor sought to molest them. Apparently he was in a hurry to get away.

They were greatly alarmed the next moment

at sight of Nellie running toward them. Her hat was off, her braids were unfastened, and she was panting for breath.

"What is wrong? What is the matter?" cried Walter and Francisco together.

"I can not find 'Rita," she replied, and burst into tears. "We were looking for sour-grass, and she went a little distance off. All at once that horrid boy came with a dead snake. He began to run after me. I ran ever so far, and at last he stopped. I begged and begged him not to throw it on me, and I cried. Then, when he went away, I called 'Rita because I could not see her. She did not answer. I went back to the place where she had been. She wasn't there. And I can't find her at all."

"But you were not far?" inquired Francisco. "She could not get lost so soon. Walter and I will find her in a minute. Sit there and rest."

The two boys were soon traversing the broad, grassy plateau. It was so bare of trees that no one could possibly be roaming over it without being seen. 'Rita was not there. Francisco called to her Indian fashion, but his calls were not answered.

"Come up, Nellie," said Walter, at last, running down again to the edge of the bank where they had left his sister. "Come and show us

where you last saw her. We can't find her nor make her hear."

The little girl was soon beside them.

"Just over there," she said, "not far from those bushes. She must have gone into them and got lost. I ran in the other direction when William came after me with the snake. Let's go down into the bushes and look for her. What is there on the other side, Francisco?"

"All bushes, thicker and thicker till you come to the road," said the Indian boy. "On the other side of the road there are more bushes, and after them a broad meadow like this."

"She couldn't get through them," said Walter. "They are so very close together and she is so timid—she would not try it."

Francisco inclined his head on one side and listened.

"Do you hear the horse's whinny?" he asked. "I have heard it three times since we came up here."

"No," replied the brother and sister. They had not heard any such sound.

"I have a thought," said the Indian boy. "I will go quietly through the bushes. There is no need for all of us. When I come back you may come along if you like. Just a stick for the snakes, and then I go."

Seizing a branch that lay at the foot of a tree, Francisco started to push his way through the thicket.

"Where do you suppose he has gone?" asked Nellie.

"Don't know," said Walter; "but Francisco is all right. He knows what he's about."

After a little while the Indian boy reappeared looking elated.

"I did not make a mistake," he said. "It is Hernando who has taken Margarita. There she sits on his lap by the wagon. He has stopped there to water the horses. Come; I will show you."

"Do you think he means to steal her, Francisco? Oh, do you think he wants to take her away?" asked Nellie, tearfully.

"That I cannot tell," said Francisco. "He will not dare, when he sees us."

"How can we stop him? He can run off with his horses. Oh, how dreadful! how dreadful!" said Nellie, all but crying.

"Now, sister, if you are going to cry, we'll have to leave you behind," said Walter, keen for an adventure. He stepped softly on tiptoe in the tracks of Francisco as he had seen other boys do in pictures.

"But I won't stay behind," answered Nellie,

stifling a sob. "Mamma would not like it if you left me here."

"We will not leave you; come along," said Francisco, leading across the meadow to another fringe of bushes. "Only be quiet," he continued, "so we will not be seen." They skirted the thicket, going a long way round, and after a time crossed the road and came out on a broad green expanse.

Two horses were feeding in the open; a wagon stood close by. The pedlar, his back to the children, was smoking under a tree. Beside him, contentedly munching candy from a box in her lap, sat Margarita.

"Ay! ay! 'Rita!" cried Francisco, coming suddenly upon them, "why did you run away?"

The child looked at the pedlar, who was visibly perturbed. "I found her over there alone," he explained to Francisco, "so I brought her here. I would have taken her back in the wagon, though it would have lost me time. I was going when I had finished my pipe."

The child looked at him in astonishment.

"And not to go to Veronica?" she asked.

"Why to Veronica? Of course not," he replied quickly.

"But you said——" began the child.

"It does not matter what he said," inter-

rupted Francisco. "Come, now; we must go home. I believe you are a rogue, Hernando," he continued turning to the pedlar. "I believe you are a great rogue——"

Hernando laughed. "Well, if I am," he said, "I am not the only one in the world. You cannot prove anything of that which you are thinking."

"If you were not guilty, Hernando," answered Francisco, "you would not so quickly understand my meaning."

The man rose to his feet and busied himself with the ponies.

"Well, go now, and let that be all," he said. "Take along with you the candy, Margarita."

Francisco lifted the child onto his shoulder. "I will carry you some," he said. "Did you want to go away from Nellie and Walter?" he asked in Spanish.

"No, only till next week," she replied. "Hernando said that there in his home were pretty dolls—oh, such pretty dolls that Veronica had for me—and many bright rings. He said that Dionysio had told him to take me there."

"But, 'Rita, do you not know that the other day Dionysio said you should never go to Veronica."

"Yes; but perhaps to-day it was different, I thought."

"He would perhaps never have brought you back. You must promise not again to go away with anybody."

"He carried me."

"Oh, well, I believe he meant to steal you. Veronica would have beaten you, 'Rita."

"I am glad not to have gone with him," said the child. "Let me walk now."

He set her down, and taking Nellie by the hand she clung to her all the way home.

As they passed the cottage where the missionary resided they saw a crowd near the door.

"It is what they call a prayer-meeting, I think," said the Indian boy.

"Not at this time of day," remarked Walter. "The missionary woman is crying."

"Maybe William frightened her with the rattlesnake," said Francisco.

"But your uncle is there—I see him," said Nellie. "He is talking to the men."

"Very well; but it is late now, and we must not stop," said Francisco. "Perhaps she has been putting some pictures in the church again. My uncle can get angry, too, sometimes."

"But he would not make a woman cry, would he, Francisco?" asked Nellie, with some anxiety.

"No; I do not think he would make a woman cry. It is strange, a little, that he is there;

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but he would be displeased if I should go over and leave the water on the roadside. Your people will be wondering why we are not back."

At the camp they had begun to feel uneasy. When everything had been explained by the children, who now that Margarita was safe rather enjoyed telling the experience, the elders were inclined to think Hernando really intended to kidnap the child."

"That is what I think," said Francisco. "When he went away to-day he was not thinking of it, maybe, but when he saw her from his high seat in the wagon he thought he would take her home with him. He has not much good sense, that fellow. If she had cried on the road he would, maybe, have brought her back. Anyhow, there is not much harm done—maybe good —for she will be careful now."

He was in the act of turning Rosinante homeward when he saw his uncle approaching. The old man looked very much troubled.

"What is it?" asked the boy.

"Something very bad," was the reply. "Something very, very bad. I do not believe it, Francisco, but the missionary woman has lost her pocket-book, and they say that you have stolen it."

CHAPTER VIII.

FALSELY ACCUSED.

FRANCISCO paled visibly under his swarthy skin. Then his face grew a dark crimson.

"They think I have stolen it!" he exclaimed. "I have never been in the house of that woman. No one can say that they have ever seen me there."

"So I told them. But there is someone there who saw you yesterday near the *ramada** next door," said Mauricio.

"What of that, uncle? Do I not go every other day with water to the people who live there? And is not the water kept under the *ramada?*"

"Very true. But there is much loud talking down there. She threatens to have you arrested."

"But you are the constable. You will not put me in the *cuartel?*"

"I must, if there is sworn out a warrant," replied Mauricio, sadly.

"Come, come," said Mr. Page, "it will not amount to that, I hope. Let us go down at

* Porch angle of brushwood.

once to the house where the money was stolen and see what they have to say—on what grounds, if any, they accuse you."

"That is the best thing to do," assented Mauricio. "It will show that you are not afraid."

The children stood amazed, grieved, and silent. Their busy minds imagined all sorts of dire possibilities for their friend Francisco.

Without a word Francisco followed the two older men, his head erect, his eyes fearless and unashamed. People looked at them in passing, nearly all in sympathy, for Francisco was a favorite with all the visitors save the very few friends of the missionary woman. The crowd had not diminished when they reached the house, and all eyes were turned toward them.

"Where is the person who has lost a pocket-book," inquired Mr. Page, looking from one to another.

"Inside," replied a man, a cripple whom Francisco had often assisted at the baths. "She is quite hysterical. I hear it contained a large sum of money. I'll never believe Francisco had anything to do with the theft."

Mr. Page did not reply. The boy gave his defender a grateful look before passing into the house with the others.

The loser of the pocket-book sat in a rocking-

chair, somewhat calmer and more composed than she had been when Mauricio left her. The sight of Francisco, however, seemed to bring on a renewal of her excitement until Mr. Page said:

"Pray be quiet, madam, until we have learned something of the particulars of this theft. I am here on behalf of this boy, whom, I am told, you accuse of having taken your pocket-book. It is a very serious accusation."

William, stationed back of his mother's chair, darted a triumphant glance at the Indian boy. Francisco stood, cap in hand, silently awaiting what the woman had to say. With a hysterical gulp, she began:

"I always keep my pocket-book with me, usually in my bosom. Yesterday, while I was lying in the hammock, a pedlar came with some notions. I bought from him a paper of pins. After paying him I put the pocket-book under the pillow of the hammock. I distinctly remember doing that. Afterward I dozed off, and upon awaking forgot all about the pocket-book. Everybody was at the baths at the time, and I hurried there so as to get my bath before dinner.

"When I came back, the Indian boy was just going off with his water-wagon. I would have spoken to him, but he avoided me. I attributed

this to surliness at the time, but now I believe it was because he was guilty and could not meet my eye."

Francisco was about to speak, but Mr. Page said: "Not yet, Francisco; not yet. Is this all the evidence you have against the boy, madam?" he continued.

"No, it is not," she rejoined. "I did not miss the pocket-book until this morning. As soon as I *did* miss it I went to the hammock. It was not there. My neighbor first put it into my head that the boy might have taken it."

"Please let me speak a word," now interrupted a kindly-looking, gray-haired woman sitting near the missionary. "I am Mrs. Minkson's nearest neighbor. We have the *ramada* in common. I want everyone in this room and in this village to understand, first and foremost, that I had no idea of accusing Francisco when I said what I did. When Mrs. Minkson came to me and told me she had lost her money, she also asked me if I had seen anyone about the place yesterday. I told her no, only Francisco just as I was coming up from my bath. I saw him stoop and pick up a blanket from the ground and throw it on the hammock. He was coming then with water for me. I saw him before he reached the *ramada* and when he went

away. I never meant that Mrs. Minkson should think he had taken her pocket-book."

"May I speak now, Mr. Page?" Francisco asked.

"Yes; tell what took place while you were in the neighborhood," said Mr. Page.

"Yesterday I came here with water about eleven o'clock," began the boy. "There was no one around. I saw Mrs. Plummer coming up from the bath-house. When I went by the hammock a blanket was lying on the ground. So it wouldn't be trampled on by someone nor get wet from my barrel, I picked it up and laid it at the foot of the hammock. I left the water for Mrs. Plummer and went away. That is all I know."

A murmur arose from the crowd, whether of approbation or the contrary could not well be determined. Mr. Page was too much concerned to notice it. Francisco and his uncle also were preoccupied.

"I believe your story, Francisco," said Mr. Page. "I trust that everyone here believes it. I can see nothing in what has been told to warrant the accusation made."

"That isn't all," exclaimed William, from behind his mother's chair. "I know something worse than that, I do."

"Out with it at once, my boy," said Mr. Page. "Let us hear everything you know."

"Well, I didn't tell this before, but I saw Francisco last night with a twenty-dollar gold-piece in his hand, standing in the restaurant."

"William," protested his mother, sharply, pushing him away from her, "didn't I tell you that had nothing to do with it. There was no gold in that pocket-book."

The crowd laughed, and William, nothing daunted, went on:

"I think it's mighty funny when an Indian like him can throw twenty-dollar gold-pieces 'round."

Francisco looked at Mr. Page; that gentleman nodded.

"In order to clear the boy of any suspicion these ill-advised and malicious remarks may have aroused in the minds of his hearers," he said, "I will now state that I gave Francisco the gold-piece to have changed for me at the restaurant."

A white boy in Francisco's position would have faced his opponent with a triumphant smile; the Indian did not even look toward him. But he glanced gratefully at Mr. Page, and the face of Mauricio grew less grave and troubled than it had been.

"I should like to ask," said Mr. Page, once more turning to the missionary, "whether you may not have been mistaken as to where you placed your pocket-book? Have you looked everywhere about the house?"

"No, sir; I have *not* been mistaken," she replied. "I remember perfectly well having put it under the pillow. It is very easy to go through this house. There is not even a closet in it. Where could it be hidden?"

"Have you looked under the mattress?"

"No, sir; I have not. I never put money under a mattress."

" 'Tis my belief, 'tis my belief," whispered a rheumatic old Irishman to Mr. Page, "that the b'y yonder," pointing to William, "has got up some thrick agin the Indian. He have a great spite agin him."

"You don't believe he has hidden the money, do you?" inquired Mr. Page.

"I do, ye know," was the reply. "He's the divil's own limb—that same youngster. And they both of them, mother and son, have a great spite agin the Indians because they're Catholics. 'Tis a shame, sir, to have that innocent crathur accused in this way."

"It is," agreed Mr. Page. "But no one who knows him will believe it. Further, there is not

the slightest evidence to support the woman's accusation."

The old man looked at him quizzically. "You are a lawyer, I believe, sir," he said.

"Yes, I am," replied Mr. Page.

"From your point of view you are right, sir," replied the old man deliberately. "There's nothing agin him. "*But—but,*" he continued with greater deliberation, laying his shriveled hand on Mr. Page's arm, "till that b'y's cleared, till the pocket-book's found or the real thief's caught—there always will be a suspicion agin him as long as he lives."

"I agree with you," said Mr. Page. "The matter is very unfortunate. But we are powerless in the matter. We can do nothing."

The old man shook his head sadly, and was about to leave the house when his glance rested on the edge of the throng near the door. His old eyes brightened. Again laying his finger on Mr. Page's coat-sleeve, he said, in a low voice:

"If I'm not mistaken here is someone who'll go to the root of the matter without much more ado. *He'll* put things through in a hurry. *He'll* find the pocket-book or the thief, or he'll know why."

Following the old man's glance, Mr. Page saw an Indian parting the crowd. He was very

tall and well-built, and his features were somewhat rugged. An air of authority betokened him a person of some importance.

"It's the Captain," said the old man. "It's Cecilio, the head man of them all. Wait, now, till ye hear him."

The Indian stepped to Mauricio's side.

"As I came through the village," he said, "I heard of the trouble." Then they talked together in their own language. Presently Cecilio went over to Mrs. Minkson.

"Madam," he said, politely in excellent English, "they say a pocket-book has been lost here by you, and that you suspect this boy, Francisco, to be the thief.

"I am the Captain of this village, and when we have sent away this crowd of people, or, at least, made them stand on the outside, we will search the house thoroughly."

"You have no right to search my house," said the missionary. "It has been done already."

"I have a right, and I will use it," he said. "Will you go out, please, my good friends, so that we may not be hindered?"

The people, complying with his request, slowly left the house.

"This is my good friend, Mr. Page," said Francisco. "May he not stay with us here?"

"Yes; that is all right," said Cecilio. "It is better that we have a witness."

"Or two," said the old Irishman, coming nearer to Mr. Page.

"Or two," repeated Cecilio, smilingly.

"Now, madam, will you kindly open these boxes and search through your clothing?" requested the Captain.

"I tell you I will not do it," said Mrs. Minkson. "This is an outrage. This is my house while I am in it, and you dare not order me to do anything I do not choose."

"Very well, madam," calmly remarked the Indian; "then we look ourselves."

"You are up to some trick," said the missionary. "The boy has probably handed it to you, and you will pretend to find it. You shall *not* search my house. Go out of here—go out!"

The two Indian men again conversed in low tones. Then Cecilio said:

"It is either that you look, or that we do. You will choose. They say that you left it in the hammock. Will you go first to the hammock, please?"

The woman saw determination in the eyes of the Captain. Very slowly she walked to the door and stepped to the *ramada,* in front of which the crowd still lingered. She lifted the

pillow and was about to replace it, protesting loudly, "This is a farce," when it fell to the ground, the open end of the cover facing downward. Out of this end a brown leather pocket-book rolled toward the feet of the spectators.

Quite a tumult of congratulation ensued. Francisco soon became the centre of a sympathetic throng. Mrs. Minkson, very much discomfited, was not one of them. On the contrary, she hurried into the house without a word and closed the door.

Cecilio turned to the spectators and, laying his hand on the shoulder of Francisco, said:

"My good friends, I see that you have not believed this boy a thief. You have seen that the woman, instead of putting the pocket-book under the pillow, placed it by accident *in* the cover. Some of you who are here know us very well. To others we are strangers. But it is just and right that the strangers should learn what is very well known to all who are our friends; and it is this:

"For more than twenty-five years the Hot Springs have been visited by white people; we have thrown open to them our houses, and we have moved out of them, going elsewhere to live; we have always kept away from them, staying in our own dwellings and going our own ways.

That no one can deny. And in all those years, in this village where no door is ever locked, never once has an Indian been known to enter a house where the people were not—not once has anything been stolen by an Indian. That, my friends, can be proved.

"Francisco, this boy here, is without father and mother, but he has been always good, always faithful, always industrious, always honest. And to-day he has not lost his good name. Soon we Indians must leave our homes, soon we must be cast out of the place of our fathers; but, at least, if it be God's will thus to chastise us, let it not be said at the end what has never been said of us—that we are thieves or robbers."

With a courteous wave of the hand, he passed through the crowd and quickly remounted his horse, a fine animal, on which he sat like a cavalier of old. As he rode away there arose a cheer from the crowd for "Captain Cecilio."

The people—whites and Indians—gathered round Francisco, and nearly everybody shook his hand. The boy received their good wishes quietly but gratefully, with the natural dignity of his race. After many a pause on the road he returned to the tent with Mr. Page and Mauricio. The good news had preceded them, and the children shouted for joy; Walter loudly ex-

pressed his belief that the whole thing had been a plot devised by the missionary for the ruin of their friend. For this he was immediately reproved by his parents for rash judgment and want of charity, but subsided only after several reminders.

Francisco reported the next day that Mrs. Minkson had apologized to him for her suspicions, which action showed her to be possessed of a Christian spirit, even though mistaken zeal had carried her out of her own province. The boy William remained implacable to the end.

CHAPTER IX.

A JAUNT.—THE VALLEY OF THE RATTLESNAKES.

BLEAK and barren as is for the most part the immediate neighborhood of the Springs, one need not ride very far to reach the cool shade of the mountain woods.

One day, when Walter and Nellie were telling Francisco of the delicious sugar-cane in their native State and lamenting that in California there were no lilacs or "snowballs," the Indian boy said:

"But yes; in the garden of the teacher there are always lilacs in the spring. From the woods the children brought them to her, young plants; now they are trees, and they bloom very well indeed. She says they are not so large or so sweet-swelling as those of her own home in the East, but yet they will do, she says. And of snowball trees she has two."

"With bright green leaves and big, round flowers, like snowballs?" asked Nellie.

"Yes, from a distance that is how they look. Now they have done blooming, but in the spring they are fine. Wild roses we have in the woods over yonder. There are spots full of them. Would you like to see? And I will show you then the sugar tree."

"Let us ask papa to have a picnic. Can we come and go in one day, Francisco?"

"Easily, if we start early enough," said Francisco.

The children lost no time in making their request. Everybody was willing to do something to vary the monotony of life in Cupa. Very early one morning a few days later the party, with Mauricio and Francisco in charge, started for the woods.

Mr. Page was something of a naturalist, or, it might more properly be said, a lover of nature

in every beautiful form. When they had come into the shadow of the woods he began to observe the various kinds of shrubs, and was pleased to find a variety of "buckeye" native to California. Presently they came upon a large cluster of bushes, growing luxuriantly, the leaves of which very much resembled those of the india-rubber tree.

"There," said Francisco, "is a tree the Americans call 'mahogany tree' on account of its color, but the Indians name it *limonada.*"

"What does that mean?" asked Mr. Page.

"The lemonade tree," said Mauricio. "The little fruits, or pods, have a sour sweetness. We soak them in water, and they make a nice lemonade. You will see our women and children gathering them when they are getting ripe. They put them into sacks and carry them home. Then they lay them in the sun to dry. It is a very nice drink. We have some at our house. Some day, if you wish, Francisco will take you a quantity."

"Yes; we'd like to taste it," said Nellie. "Perhaps we might gather some of the fruit and take it home."

"Of what need?" said the Indian boy. "There you have plenty lemons. Here we have none—that is, unless we buy them."

"They are cheaper now than in the old days," said Mauricio. "Still, many of our people like better the *limonada* pods."

"Over there, in the cañon," said Francisco, "are the sugar trees. It is not the time now for the fruit, but later in the autumn they will gather it and dry it."

They followed a well-worn road along the course of a small stream which trickled down the mountain-side—now disappearing, now shining like a thread of silver, now crossing the path in front of them. All along the road, marking its course in its curving deviations, grew the beautiful wax myrtle, with its smooth, dark-green leaves and perfect, white flowers.

As they plunged deeper into the woods, the rich, pungent odor of the mountain sage grew more pronounced; they came upon wild bees flitting from flower to flower. Clumps of wild-rose trees, drooping with blooms, offered a generous hospitality to the industrious gatherers of honey. However, the little wayfarers undoubtedly preferred the aromatic white and black sage.

The foliage grew more and more dense; soon the trees on either side arched over their heads; the bed of the stream was now perfectly dry. Just at the bend of a broad cañon they came

upon more bushes, in some places as high as trees and with a crown of dense, pale foliage at their top.

"What are these?" inquired Mr. Page. "Some are like dwarfs, others are giants, and their trunks and stocks seem to have been twisted by some convulsion of nature."

"That is the manganita—the Christmas berry of California," said Francisco.

"Ah, I see," remarked Mr. Page. "When we first came, don't you remember, mother, it reminded us of the eastern holly."

"Yes," said his wife, "and it made me very homesick to see it."

"It is always beautiful, the manganita," said Mauricio. "About December, when it is warm in the sheltered cañons though there may be snow in the mountains, the manganita puts forth pretty, small white bells."

"Sometimes they are a little pink," said Francisco, "and then they are prettier. When they fall the shrub seems to grow stronger, and the new shoots come forth scarlet and crimson. They look beautiful with the green of the older leaves."

"Again in the fall the fruit ripens," said Mauricio, "and near to Christmas, when the berries are a bright red, you begin to see the

wagons loaded with the Christmas greens coming down the mountain roads and going into the city. Oh, I have often taken down a load; it makes money for us."

"That manganita is the finest thing we know," said Francisco. "Deep in the ground are the roots; they make good fuel. We burn them, and some sell them in town. You have, maybe, burned the manganita roots, Mr. Page?"

"No, we have not," was the reply; "but if you ever fetch us down a good load in the fall, Francisco, we will burn them this winter."

"Very well; it shall be done," said the boy. "I shall be glad to do so."

"It must be nearly lunch-time," ventured Nellie. "I feel pretty hungry."

Her father looked at his watch. "It is only eleven," he said, "but we had breakfast early. There does not seem to be any level ground just here. Shall we come to some after a while, Mauricio?"

"Soon," replied the Indian. "Wait a while and you will see. There will be water, good water, and we can make coffee."

The ascent had grown very steep; the horses tugged slowly but willingly upward. Suddenly they seemed to be at the top of the mountain. The slope on the other side, becoming very grad-

ual, led into a broad, green, pleasant valley fringed by luxuriant foliage.

"How beautiful!" was the general exclamation.

"It seems like an enchanted valley," said Aunt Mary. "If you will observe, it forms an almost perfect circle. That lovely fringe of green surrounding it—the foot-hills just above—and those magnificent mountains in the background—it does indeed make one think of an enchanted valley."

"Once it *was encantado,*"* rejoined Mauricio.

"What is it called? Has it any name?" asked Walter.

The Indians smiled and looked at each other.

"You will not be frightened if I tell you?" asked Mauricio. "The danger is past—nothing can hurt you. The spell is long since broken."

"Oh, tell us!" cried Nellie. "We won't be frightened."

"It is called *'El Valle de los Cascabeles'*—'The Valley of the Rattlesnakes.'"

"Ugh!" exclaimed Nellie. "Are there rattlesnakes down there?"

"Not any more, I think; perhaps never any there," answered Mauricio. "But there is a story."

* Enchanted.

"A story? Oh, do tell it to us," cried the children.

"You see, as we come nearer," replied the Indian, "that in the centre is a large, round spot where nothing is growing—no grass, no bush, no tree."

It was true. In strange contrast to the fresh verdure all around, this single, bald, unlovely spot, black as though fire had burned it, stood forth.

"Once, very long ago," said Mauricio, "there lived a tribe of Indians in those mountains over there where the Volcan smokes. They came every year here to this valley for their *fiesta*—all the tribe. Once they were at war with some others who dwelt beyond the Volcan, near to the peaks of the Cuyamaca. Then it happened that the son of the chief of the Volcans was wounded and captured in a fight, and they took him to the camp of the Cuyamacas, and there he was tended by the women.

"Then, when he was well and able to go again back to his own people, he vowed that he would have for his wife the daughter of the chief of the Cuyamacas, the fairest of her tribe, and that there should be peace forever between the Cuyamacas and the Volcans. Now, the chief of the Cuyamacas was very, very old, and he was not

unwilling that peace should be before he died. Not so the chief of the Volcans. He called down all the wrath of the great spirit on his son, and the young man, angered at his father, swore that he would disobey him and join the side of the enemy against him. 'The great good spirit will desert thee,' said his father. 'Thou and thy posterity shall be accursed.'

" 'Then I call upon the spirit of evil to aid me,' said the rash young brave, and bursting away from his father he betook himself to this valley. When he reached it he saw in the middle of the broad space a large, flat stone which before had not been in the valley. And a voice said in his ear: 'Lift up the stone.' But he said: 'I can not; it is twenty times broader, and many times heavier than I.' 'Lift up the stone,' said the voice again.

"Then he obeyed, and there came forth a legion of rattlesnakes, scattering in every direction; but they touched him not. He slept, and in the morning returned to the camp of the Cuyamacas and married the daughter of the chief. But the people did not trust him, and his wife taunted him with his ingratitude to his parents. He bowed his head and went forth once more. In the bitterness of his grief he wandered to the valley, and there he saw lying dead around the

ashes of a camp-fire many braves and squaws and papooses of his tribe. His father and mother were there, and his sisters and his fellow-braves. All about them were the cascabeles darting to and fro, and then he knew that the evil spirit had done this thing because he had called upon him for aid.

"So he lay down in the centre of the valley, where the stone had been, and he cried out: 'I renounce you, O Spirit of Evil! Be it done unto me, O Spirit of Good, as it has been done unto my people.' Then there came a great fire out of the earth beneath him, and even to his bones he was destroyed. But perhaps he was thus purified from his sin. Since that time this place has been known as the 'Valley of the Rattlesnakes.' Where the young chief was burned no blade of grass has since grown."

"A very interesting story," said Mr. Page.

"But who told of it if they were all dead?" queried Walter, a little skeptical.

Mauricio shrugged his shoulders. "That I can not say," he replied. "It was an old story long before my grandfather was born."

"And what became of the rattlesnakes? Are any of their descendants living among those bushes?" asked Mrs. Page.

"If they are," said Aunt Mary, "I think we

ought to camp somewhere else for lunch and rest."

"We shall not be near the bushes," said Mauricio, "and there is no other place near where we can stop to eat."

"You will never see a snake in an open place like this," said Francisco. "There is no danger."

"We will stop now," said Mr. Page. They were at the edge of the circular green basin, and Mauricio pulled up the horses. The party left the wagon, glad to stretch their limbs after so long a ride. A couch of robes and blankets was made for Mrs. Page under a tree. Aunt Mary sat down beside her, and the others busied themselves in spreading out the lunch.

"Come; I will show you a pretty sight," said Francisco to the children, taking a tin pail from the wagon. They followed him to the bushes, in the midst of which stood a large sycamore tree, the only one to be seen. Putting aside its luxuriant boughs, the Indian boy disclosed a sparkling spring tumbling down from the rocks above.

"This it is which makes the valley so green," he said, "and the bushes to grow everywhere." The water was icy cold. "It is an iron spring," continued Francisco, "and good for many dis-

eases. Many persons camp in this section. There are pretty little spots all around."

"See that rock above the spring?" asked Nellie, pointing to the spot. "It looks like an armchair with a flat back and a broad seat. It must be lovely to sit up there and listen to the trickle, trickle of the water over the pebbles."

"I never thought of that," said Francisco. "Many times as I have been here, I have never thought of that. But so it is."

When they returned with the water Aunt Mary made the coffee, and luncheon was ready. Afterward Mr. Page and Mauricio walked up and down, discussing the coming eviction of the Indians; Mrs. Page and Aunt Mary were resting; Francisco and Walter were cutting twigs for whistles.

For some time Nellie wandered about alone till finally her steps turned in the direction of the iron spring. She had a strong desire to sit in the natural armchair she had discovered. It was just like what a girl in a story-book would do, she thought.

For some moments she stood watching the clear, sparkling water falling over the stones; then, stepping across the little stream she climbed up on the other side and seated herself on the broad rock, her feet resting on the turfy

grass beneath. It was very pleasant to sit in that shady nook, to watch the sunlight filter through the green leaves of the sycamore, and listen to the singing of the tiny waterfall.

Nellie was tired; she had been up since dawn. Pulling off her sun-bonnet, she leaned her head against the flat, cool stone that formed the back of the comfortable seat.

"Whiz—whiz—whiz!" went something close behind her. Leaning back, she tried to locate the sound. "It is like a corn-crake," she thought. "But I never heard anything *just* like it. Can it be a bird?"

"Whiz—whiz!" she heard again, but now the sound receded and presently ceased.

"I wonder if it could have been a big grasshopper," thought the child, once more resuming her restful position. In a moment she was fast asleep.

"Nellie! Nellie!" called her father; but she did not hear him.

"Nellie! Nellie!" repeated Walter a few moments later.

The child slept on, while the golden light still trickled through the leaves, and the silvery water sang its one, unchanging song. Something that had crawled away, something Nellie had mercifully not seen!—long, lithe, slender,

sinuous, horrible, with slimy skin and loathsome head and glittering eyes—began slowly to return, creeping toward the child in the sylvan chair.

She did not awake, for the crawling thing made no perceptible sound. The bushes parted. Francisco was there, hearing, seeing, and in an instant, leaping the stream, springing to her side.

In a moment she was in his arms, wide-awake and frightened; but the creeping creature the Indian boy had seen with its head erect and fangs exposed had vanished in the bushes, despoiled of its prey. Another instant, and they all had surrounded the little girl. Alarmed by Walter's shriek, for he also had seen the snake, they had run to the spot.

When everyone had grown calm again, they looked about for Francisco. While they were wondering where he had gone and why, the boy came crashing through the brushwood, carrying upon a stout stick a rattlesnake more than six feet long.

CHAPTER X.

THE ALMIRANTES.

WHEN Nellie saw the reptile she grew white from fear and aversion.

"Oh, take it away! take it away!" she cried. "I can't bear to look at it."

Francisco flung it into the bushes.

"Some would stuff it and keep it," he said. "And some make belts of it. But you shall never see it again, my good little Nellie, if you do not wish." Later he told Walter that he would get the snake again, hide it in the wagon when the child was not looking, and sell it to someone at the Springs. It was unusually large and venomous, and loud were the thanks Francisco received on all sides for the rescue.

"Weren't you afraid, my boy?" asked Aunt Mary, placing her hand on Francisco's arm.

"No, I was not afraid," said the boy. "Often I have killed a rattlesnake before."

"But were you not fearful that it would spring at you, or on Nellie, if you made a noise? Or that it might fix its eyes upon you and hold you there?"

"No, no; it is not true that they can do that," said Francisco, "unless, perhaps, with birds, who are so very little that they stand still with fear. The snakes run away when they hear a noise; they are afraid of noise and of men."

"There is probably a nest of snakes in the bushes," said Mr. Page.

"I think so," replied Francisco. "Shall we look?"

"No, no—not for us," said Mrs. Page. "Let us get as far away from here as we can, as soon as we can. The thought of the danger the child escaped makes me nervous and afraid."

"Strange that you did not hear it in the bushes," said Francisco.

"I did," responded Nellie. "I am sure I did. It went 'whiz—whiz,' like a corn-crake or a grasshopper, or those funny little windmills you take in your hand and whirl around, mamma. Why, it made me feel sleepy to listen to it; I know it made me go to sleep——"

"That was the rattle," said Francisco.

Mauricio was already putting the horses into the wagon, and in a few moments they were leaving the beautiful green valley behind, although they did not retrace the route they had taken that morning.

Mauricio, wishing to show them the source of

the iron spring, suggested that they make a circuit, which would bring them eventually to the road. All agreed. When they came opposite the bare spot where the immolation of the Indian was supposed to have taken place Walter asked:

"What became of the huge stone under which the snakes were hidden, Mauricio?"

"I do not know," replied the Indian; "I have never heard. Maybe it crumbled to pieces after awhile, or maybe it disappeared as suddenly as it came."

"I went over there this morning, or, rather, Francisco and I did," said Walter, "and *we* believe, at least *I* do, that there is nothing peculiar about the spot at all. You can see there have been a great many fires there—that is why nothing grows."

"No Indian would make a fire there," said Francisco.

"Wouldn't you?" queried Mr. Page.

"No, I would not," said the boy. "I would be afraid."

"I would just love to try it," said Walter. "If we were going to stay longer I would."

"And then maybe you would be burned up, like the bad brave of long ago," said Mauricio, laughing.

"Well, we've had one experience to-day; that is enough, Walter," said his mother. "I am not afraid anything might happen, but do not think I would allow you to go against all the traditions of the place. The legend is undoubtedly obscure, but *something* must have happened there. We have had evidence enough to-day that there are some rattlesnakes about and that the valley deserves its name. I do not think I can ever look at a rattlesnake's skin again."

When they left the valley the road wound up a long, moderately steep ascent overlooking another valley similar to the one they had just left, but much smaller.

"One might truly call this a hidden nook," remarked Mr. Page.

"And that is what they call it," said Mauricio, *'El Valle Escondido'*—the hidden valley. Over there at the edge of the brush is a camp."

When they came nearer they met several Indian children with long, slender reeds in their hands.

"They have gathered them by the stream, and they are taking them to be softened," explained Mauricio. "It is of those that they make baskets."

"The famous Indian baskets?" inquired Aunt Mary.

"Yes," replied Mauricio. "There under that tent is a woman weaving one, and just across sits a man making a mat."

They now saw that they were in the midst of a genuine Indian camp.

"Do those people belong to Cupa?" asked Mr. Page of Mauricio.

"No," he replied; "they are the Volcans—they live up there behind the mountains, but come here in the summer to get the reeds. Always at this season you will find them here. They come and go."

Under hastily erected brushwood dwellings quite a number of persons, mostly women, were seated. They accosted Mauricio and Francisco in their own tongue. "They ask if we will stay a little," said Mauricio, turning to Mr. Page.

Mrs. Page and Aunt Mary both expressing themselves as much interested, the party alighted and walked about the camp. A large portion of the luncheon had been left. This Mauricio distributed among the Indians, after Mr. Page had inquired whether they would accept it. They did not seem so intelligent as the Cupa Indians and looked much poorer. This, Francisco explained, was because they had not had so much intercourse with the white people.

The process of basket-weaving appeared to be

slow. The material was soaking in earthern jars, one long strand at a time being woven in and out, apparently without design. However, this is not the case. Wonderfully beautiful shapes these baskets assume under the skilful hands of the weaver.

The rug-maker, a man past ninety, with bent shoulders and white hair, smilingly held up his work for examination. It was of coarser material than that of the baskets and the work went much faster.

"He has all he can do, old Feliciano," said Mauricio. "His son is blind. He cannot work, and his grandson, with whom he lives, has lost the use of his limbs. There are two little girls and a boy, and the mother is dead. With the work of his hands that old man supports *four* generations. He is teaching it now to his granddaughters, but he tells me that they do not care much to learn it."

"Will he sell us a mat?" asked Mrs. Page.

"Yes, if he has one there. They are nearly always sold before they are finished. The people at the Springs buy them, and now the stores are selling them. They wear very well."

Feliciano had two or three mats on hand. Mrs. Page bought them all.

"Come and see this primitive cooking-stove,"

said Mr. Page, who had been passing from one tent to another.

A little removed from the rest a brush-shed, open on every side, was being used as a kitchen. A large hole in the roof gave egress to the smoke. A circular wall of round, flat stones about a foot in height had been erected; within this wall the fire had been made. A huge black pot containing an appetizing stew was steaming on the embers. In front of it, in an upright pan, a rabbit was roasting. A woman was peeling potatoes, another cutting green tomatoes and mixing them with mango peppers.

"All *that* goes into the pot," said Francisco. "Don't you like the smell?"

"Will everybody eat out of that pot?" inquired Aunt Mary, to whom this primitive method did not strongly appeal.

"No one will eat out of it but the dogs—what is left," laughed Francisco. "There are dishes and plates and knives and forks in every house. But everybody will have some of it, for each has helped to provide the food. To-day one does the cooking, or two, or three, and to-morrow others."

After smiling adieux from the Indians the party resumed its journey. On the opposite side of the hill they came to another camp,

much more attractive in appearance than that of the Volcans.

"These are some of the Santa Isabel Indians," said Mauricio. "They live in the valleys hereabout, but farther back among the mountains. There was once a church for them, and a very good one, of adobe—now nothing but the walls remain. But they are going to build another. The priest comes once a year."

"Do they have Mass then?" asked Mrs. Page.

"Oh, yes," replied Mauricio. "They have it in the brush-house over there. Did you not see the bells when you came?"

"No; we did not notice them," said Mr. Page.

"They are always photographed by visitors," remarked Francisco. "They came from old Spain. They are the finest toned in California; there is much gold and silver in them."

"We shall have to look at them on our way home," said Aunt Mary. "I am greatly interested in such things."

"They are more than two hundred years old," said Mauricio. "The Volcans and Santa Isabels are very proud of them."

And now once more they were at the top of the ascent overlooking a valley much smaller than either of the others. Behind this rose an

almost perpendicular hill covered with an undergrowth of various kinds of bushes.

Two snow-white tents were pitched at its base. In front of one of them a young girl lay reading in a hammock. At her feet a boy was making a bow and arrow. In the door of the tent an old lady, with a white, fleecy shawl thrown over her shoulders and a lace scarf over her snow-white hair, was knitting.

"They are the Almirantes," said Francisco in a whisper to Miss Nellie and Walter. "They come every year to the Iron Spring."

Respectfully saluting the old lady, who arose at their approach, the party was about to pass on when, coming forward, she said, "How do you do, Mauricio and Francisco? And how is Cecilio?"

"All are well, Señora," was the reply.

"And you are from the Springs—driving for the day?" she continued, courteously addressing Mrs. Page. Being answered in the affirmative, she said:

"I am the Señora Almirante; I live with my grandchildren at the ranch not far from San Diego. We come to this place every year for the last five—no, four years. I find it does me a great deal of good."

Mr. Page then introduced himself and his family.

"Oh, can it be that you are the friends of the Gordons, our neighbors, of whom we have heard them speak so often? Father Gregorio told me also that you had been living in California, and had now decided to remain here."

"Yes, indeed," replied Mrs. Page, "the Gordons are old friends. We were disappointed on coming out to learn that they had gone East again."

"Well, it is only for a time, you know," said the Señora. "It is only to settle some business, and then they will return."

"Ramona," she continued, addressing the young lady in the hammock, "come here to be made acquainted with some friends of the Gordons. And you also, Alejandro," to the boy.

They came forward, the girl tall, dark and slender, with a crown of magnificent jet-black hair wound round and round her small head; the boy, several years younger than his sister, but very much resembling her in feature.

"Any friends of the Gordons we are very glad to know," said Ramona Almirante in response to the kindly greetings of Mr. and Mrs. Page. "What a pity you are not camping here with us at the Spring. It is so pleasant."

Walter and Alejandro were by this time conversing like old friends. But the day was wear-

ing on. Mauricio reminded them that there was considerable traveling to be done before sundown, and they were compelled to say good-by. In the few moments' intercourse they had had the Pages were charmed with the Señora and her grandchildren. She promised to call at their home in the city in October, when she expected to make her usual yearly trip.

"Will you not come to the Springs for a day before returning to town?" asked Mrs. Page. "We could manage to entertain you pleasantly, and even put you up for the night."

A slight change passed over the Señora's countenance.

"I thank you very much," she replied. "I do not go there—I do not like the place; but we shall soon meet again. With friends of the Gordons we *must* be friends."

"What charming persons," remarked Aunt Mary as they drove on. "If all the old Spanish families were like this one, I do not wonder that poets and story-writers lament their passing away."

"Many are like them," rejoined Mauricio. "The Señora has done much good in her time. Once they were a very rich family."

"How very dark the girl and boy are," said Mrs. Page.

"The boy, mother—the boy looks like Francisco. Don't you think so, Mauricio?" asked Walter.

"I have never thought of it," the Indian replied. Francisco said nothing.

They had not gone far when they met two Indians, a man and a woman, both considerably advanced in years, carrying bundles of fagots on their shoulders.

"Ay, ay!" called Mauricio. *"Como estan ustedes, Concilio Valeriano?"*

The couple halted.

"Ay, ay, Mauricio! We did not know you. We are not so young as we once were," the old man said. "We do not see so well."

"But you are strong and well still," rejoined Mauricio. "We have been at the camp. We have seen the Señora. These ladies and gentlemen I have been giving a ride to-day."

"Well, well," said the old woman; "and is this not Francisco?"

"Yes," said the boy; "am I grown tall?"

"Yes, yes, and handsome, too!" exclaimed the old woman. "We are glad to have seen you. How is Cecilio, and Maria, and Juan Diego?"

"All are well," replied Mauricio. *"Adios."*

"Adios!" rejoined the pair and, bowing po-

litely to the occupants of the wagon, they passed on.

"They are the servants of the Señora," said Mauricio, when they had resumed their way. "They have lived many, many years with her. They are related to us, both husband and wife."

The moon had risen when they reached the camp. Charlie was awaiting them with a good dinner. Mrs. Page insisted that Mauricio and Francisco partake.

When the rest of the family had retired Mr. Page, not feeling sleepy, went out for a walk and a smoke.

Near the springs he met the stage-driver, about to fill a pail with hot water. After having told him of their drive and the meeting with the Almirantes, Mr. Page said:

"They seem to be very fine people."

"They are—what is left of them," rejoined old Chadwick. "Forty year I've known them. The old Señora is as proud as Lucifer. Captain, I can tell you that, nice as she is. She's never got over that mistake of her son—never will; though she's a mother to both them children."

"What mistake was that?" inquired Mr. Page.

"Why, didn't you notice how dark them two

are? Didn't Mauricio tell you nothing about them?"

"No, he did not."

"Why, they're part Indian. Couldn't you see it? Notice how fair the Señora is beside them."

"Yes, but we never surmised that they had Indian blood," said Mr. Page.

"Well, they have, sir, good and strong. Their mother is a full-blooded Indian, living on the Mesa Grande—married again to a good fellow —Indian—up there. She's a cousin to Mauricio and Francisco. Lots of their relations living round here. That's why the Señora never comes to Warner's. I don't blame her—it's a bitter pill."

"It must have gone hard with her," said Mr. Page.

"It did. Yet she took that girl when she was a baby, and has raised her ever since. They do say she never knew she was part Indian until four or five years ago. The old lady took the boy then—he was at the mission school. Now she sends him up to Santa Clara. They're fine children—the image of their father, both of them. Miss Ramona, she's a perfect lady if there ever was one."

The next day Mr. Page said to Mauricio:

"Chadwick told me the story of the Almir-

ante children last night. I know now why it is that Francisco looks like the boy."

"Yes?" replied Mauricio. "Chadwick talks too much, I think. Still, everybody knows it. But it would not have been for either Francisco or myself to have been the first to tell of that which has caused the Señora so much unhappiness."

Which Mr. Page considered, and justly, another admirable trait in the Indian whom he had already learned to admire and respect.

CHAPTER XI.

THE "JUNTA."

THE Pages had been six weeks at the Hot Springs. The invalid, quite recovered, was able to join them in all their expeditions. The children had enjoyed every waking moment of their stay, and the sleeping moments also, it might be said, if one should judge of that by the soundness of their repose.

"Our vacation is nearly over," said Mr. Page one morning, looking up from a letter he had been reading.

"Oh, papa," cried Walter and his sister, "do we have to go home soon?"

"Pretty soon," was the reply. "This letter calls me home. Mr. Dillon has business in Arizona, and wants to start not later than the first of September."

Mr. Dillon was Mr. Page's partner. He had already postponed his departure beyond the time originally set. Mr. Page did not feel that he could ask him to do so again, and the elder members of the party were beginning to feel that home would be welcome.

Not so the children. Rugged with health, bubbling over with happiness, and almost as brown as the young Indians, they deplored the necessity of leaving a spot with which they had become thoroughly familiar, and whose strange, peculiar people they had learned to know and love. The Indians are slow to make friends among the whites, but their confidence once given, they do not soon withdraw it. Walter and Nellie had long since been initiated into the mysteries of herb gathering, fruit drying, blanket and basket weaving, rug making and beef jerking. They could talk quite intelligently on all these subjects.

That which interested them most, appealing strongly to their tender sympathies, was the subject of the removal of the Indians from the Springs.

"They talk of it everywhere we go," said the boy to his father one evening. "They are always asking us if we think perhaps the government will let them stay, papa, and what *you* think of it.

"We always tell them that it isn't the government that is putting them out, but they can't understand that. They say if the government can buy them or give them another home they might just as well let them stay. I think it is dreadful, dreadful for the people to drive them away."

"Yes, it is both sad and unjust, it seems to me," said their father; "but such has been the fate of the Indian ever since the white man landed on these shores. It has always been 'move on, move on'——"

"Till there isn't any more land to move to," interrupted Walter.

"There is going to be a *Junta* to-morrow or the day after," said Nellie. "The commissioners are coming to talk to them."

"A good many of them think they won't have to go, because Mr. Lummis is coming, papa," said Walter.

"That will not make any difference in one way," said their father, "though it may in another. Mr. Lummis is a true friend of the In-

dians. He will exert all his efforts to have them removed to a desirable place, where there will be plenty of water, fertile soil, and every other favorable condition."

"I heard a man say the other day to Captain Blacktooth that the Indians had not been here more than twenty-five years."

"And what did Cecilio answer?"

"He said, pointing to the graveyard: 'Look at our graves on the hillside. Some of those crosses crumble like ashes. Touch one, it falls to pieces in your hand. And yet there are crosses there fifty years old that have not begun to crumble or fall.' "

"What did the man say to that argument?"

"He said wood rotted very fast in this country."

"Which is not true," rejoined Mr. Page.

"Then Cecilio said, in the most scornful way: 'You can read in the reports of the lawsuit that one of the white commanders wrote more than fifty years ago that the Indians at Warner's Ranch were made to work by flogging them. Now you flog us no longer, but you do as bad, or worse. That was before I was born, yet you say we were not here twenty-five years back. You would better study the case first before you say such things.' "

"Then Cecilio went away," said Nellie, "and the man said he would like to flog *him*—Cecilio."

"It was funny about Francisco, then, papa," said Walter. "He was coming with a big bucket of water, and he stumbled over that man's foot and spilled a lot."

"Was the man angry?" asked his father, with a smile.

"Oh, very!"

"And Francisco?"

"He said, 'Oh, excuse me,' and went on. When I told him he was not always so awkward as that, he laughed and said: 'Sometimes I am awkward, Walter. Sometimes I have been, and perhaps I will be again.' And he never smiled, papa—just walked along with his eyes on the ground. I am sure he did it purposely."

"Yes, I think he did," said Mr. Page.

"But you don't think it was any harm, do you?" inquired Nellie.

"No, I don't," was the reply.

"I'd have emptied the whole bucket on his head if I had been an Indian," said Walter. "Those people are too patient."

"And so you would be, my son, if you had been hunted for five hundred years as they have been," said Mr. Page.

Early the next morning there was an unusual stir in the village. The Indians had donned their best clothes, and a general air of expectation pervaded everything. All eyes seemed to turn in the direction of the Cold Spring, from which it was expected the visitors would arrive. At last a carriage was seen approaching, and all the natives were out to meet it. After luncheon in the restaurant the people followed the commissioners to the schoolhouse, where Mr. Charles Lummis explained the case to them as clearly as it was possible to do. They listened in respectful silence, and then went slowly and silently away.

The next morning they reassembled.

"Have you thought about what was said yesterday?" asked one of the commissioners.

"Yes," came in a low murmur from the crowd.

"And what have you to say?"

"That we wish to stay here in our homes," answered Captain Cecilio.

"But that is impossible. You have been told that it cannot be. This land does not belong to you any more. The law has so decided it."

"If once it was ours, why not still? We have not sold it. We have not given it away; we have not left it. Why, then, is it not our own?"

"That has already been explained. You allowed the time to pass without presenting your claim until it was too late."

"But we did not know, and our old men did not know," cried Cecilio in a loud voice.

"The law takes no account of that."

"It is not just; we do not understand the law."

"Nor we, at all times. But it has been decided, and it cannot be changed. Think now of the outside country that you know, and make up your minds where you wish to go. The government will do what it is best for you."

"Let us go to the Great Father in Washington and plead with him—I and some of my people," requested Cecilio.

"It cannot be. It would be useless. There is only one thing to be done."

"And that thing we shall never do of our own free will," cried Cecilio, flinging out his arms and shaking his black locks in the face of the speaker.

Then began a loud talk in the Cupeño language, for in this emergency the Spanish failed them. The white men waited quietly until the tumult had subsided, knowing that it was best to let them give vent to their feelings so long repressed. At length a fine-looking young

woman stepped forward and, without the least embarrassment, offered to translate the answers of her people into the Spanish tongue.*

"We thank you for coming here to speak with us," she said, as courteously as any lady in the land.

"We thank you for coming here to talk with us in a way we can understand. It is the first time any one has done so. They have said, 'You must go, you must go,' but they have not told us, assembled together, *why* we must go. Some of our old people have never believed it till now, and some of us will not yet believe that it can happen.

"You ask us to think what place we like next best to this place, where we always have lived. You see that graveyard out there? There are our fathers and our grandfathers. You see that Eagle-nest Mountain, and that Rabbit-hole Mountain? When God made them he gave us this place. We have always been here; we do not care for any other place. It may be good, but it is not ours. We have always lived here, we would rather die here. Our fathers did; we cannot leave them. Our children were born here—how can we go away? If you give us the best place in the world it is not so

* Charles F. Lummis, in "Out West."

good for us as this. The Captain he say his people cannot go anywhere else; they cannot live anywhere else. Here they always live; their people always live here. There is no other place. This is our home. We ask you to get it for us. The Indians always here. We stay here. Everybody knows this is Indian land. These Hot Springs always Indian. We cannot live anywhere else. We were born here, and our fathers are buried here. We do not think of any place after this. We want this place and not any other place."

"But if the government cannot buy this place for you, then what would you like next best?"

"There is no other place for us. We do not want you to buy any other place. If you will not buy this place we will go into the mountains like quail and die there, the old people and the women and children. Let the government be glad and proud. It can kill us. We do not fight; we do what it says. If we cannot live here we want to go into those mountains and die. We do not want any other home."

It was useless to parley with the poor Cupeños. That they would receive the value and more than the value of their houses, that they would be given material to build other and better dwellings, that soil as fertile and water as

abundant would be found for them, that they would be provided with new agricultural tools, that they would be transported free of charge to their new home—none of these things availed. To each and every argument they made the same reply:

"We want no other place, we want no new houses, or lands, or tools for farming. This is our home, here let us stay. Or, if you will not, let us go into the mountains and die."

It was very pathetic. Not only Walter and Nellie, but their father also, wiped away more than one sympathetic tear as, standing on the edge of the crowd, they listened to that soulful cry, nearly as old as the world:

"Here is our home, here let us stay. Die we can and will, but give up our homes we cannot."

The commissioners, unable to make any impression upon the Indians, soon departed, all of them deeply affected by the proceedings.

They had now nothing to do but continue their search for available lands, fearing it might yet come to pass that the Indians would have to be ejected by force from their homes.

In groups of two or three, the men together, the women and children following, but all composed, all silent, they went to their several dwellings. It had been a sorrowful day in

Cupa; every hope raised by the expectation of meeting the commissioners had been dashed to the ground. Mr. Page and the children walked silently back to the camp, longing to exchange words of sympathy with these humble friends, yet respecting their silent grief too deeply to intrude upon it.

"Children, you will never forget this day," said their father. "Let it, then, always be a lesson to you, though it is not likely either of you will be called upon to decide the destiny of any nation, or part of a nation, however small. From his point of view, the present owner of Warner's Ranch has a perfect, undeniable right to occupy these lands, and so he has in the eyes of the law. He is not an unkindly man, I am told, nor is he a poor man. Yet it would seem that now he has neglected a grand opportunity for doing a generous action and gaining not only the gratitude of these poor people, but the admiration and respect of the whole country.

"However, it seems he cannot find it in his heart to allot them their beloved nine hundred acres out of his broad possessions, numbering thirty thousand. It has been said truly by the wisest lips that ever spoke: 'It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than

for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.' "

CHAPTER XII.

THE RETURN.

On the morning after the *Junta* Dionysio returned from the large ranch where he had been helping the harvesters. Or, rather, he returned on the evening of that day, but came down to the Pages' camp in the morning.

Margarita, in her pretty red dress and new shoes and stockings, came to meet him, with many childish expressions of joy. He took her in his arms, fondled her cheek against his, and said in Spanish:

"*Querida,* you love your brother?"

"*Si,*" replied the child. "Dionysio knows it well."

"And you love also the white people who have been so kind to you?"

"*Si,* very much," was the reply.

"And would you be willing, *Querida,* to go far away with them to stay?"

"Will you come, too?" asked the child.

Dionysio shook his head and looked at her steadfastly.

"Not to see you any more?"

Again he shook his head.

"Then I shall not go. Where my Dionysio stays there will I stay. You will not send me away."

"No, my sweet one, I shall not send you away."

He put her down and sought Mr. Page, who was smoking back of the tent. After they had exchanged a few remarks he said:

"Last night I had a long talk with Cecilio. He thinks it is not well that I give my little sister to the white people. And Cecilio knows. Good and kind you will be to her, I am sure; but if you die, and your wife—then what? And even before that? If you keep her like one of yourselves, no other white people will do so—then where is she? Thrown on the world like so many have been—a stranger to her people, not wanted by the others—what is to become of her then? And even if I am living she will have forgotten me. Is it not right what I say?"

"Yes, in some respects it is," answered Mr. Page. "But we were speaking of the child last night, Dionysio—my wife and aunt and myself.

My aunt has formed quite an affection for the little one, and proposed that she should take her back to the East, educate her, and have her for a companion."

"Your aunt is no longer young," replied Dionysio.

"No, she is not young."

"And when she dies, what then?"

"You may be sure the child would be well provided for."

"That may be true. But it is the same thing. She would still be alone."

"You have the right to decide, Dionysio," said Mr. Page. "She belongs to you. What would you do with her? Would you send her to the Mission until she is grown?"

"Then she would not care for me, maybe. No; I think not the Mission."

"But she would learn to read, then, and to sew, and to cook, and to be neat."

"I can teach her to read, and our women—some of them, can cook well and sew."

"But you do not mean that you and she will live alone together? You are away so often—how could you manage it?"

A smile appeared on the stolid face of the Indian, and a little shamefacedly he replied:

"You have been good to the child, Mr. Page,

and to me. I will tell you: On the ranch where I have been working there is an Indian family in charge. The owners do not live there much. These Indians are good people, and know well how to keep house. The girl was for a time at the Mission. That is where I will take my little sister."

A light burst upon Mr. Page.

"Oh," he said laughingly. "You are going to be married, Dionysio?"

"Yes, sir," replied the Indian, also laughing. "I am going to marry Victoria. It is all settled. I can have work there as long as I wish."

"Then you do well to keep your sister," said Mr. Page. "And I congratulate you, Dionysio; you deserve a good wife."

And so it was that the little Indian girl who had so endeared herself to the family was left behind when they departed from the village. Aunt Mary was sorely disappointed. She had made many plans for the future of the child; but on reflection she, too, saw that Dionysio's plan was the most proper and natural. But never did a small daughter of Cupa have a neater or more attractive outfit than that which arrived from town as soon as possible after the Pages returned.

At last the morning came for their departure.

It seemed as though all the women and children in the place had assembled to bid them good-by.

Alfonsa, almost hidden under pots, pans, kettles, blankets and clothing which they had given her, followed the wagon to the beginning of the diverging road. Mauricio was absent, but Francisco rode beside them as far as the top of the mesa land which looked down upon the village. There was regret in every heart as they made their adieux, but they hoped to see him again, for he had promised to bring them a load of wood for the winter.

They did not forget to look out for the bells of Santa Isabel. When near the end of the first stage of the homeward journey they saw them in the distance. The framework, gnarled and blackened by age, looked like a gibbet against the sky. When they came nearer Charlie asked Walter if he did not want to get down and ring the bells.

"What would the Indians think?" asked Walter. "Might they not imagine they were being called for something?"

"That's so," was the reply. "I did not mean to ring them, exactly, but to strike them. They have such a beautiful, clear tone. I have a fine hickory stick here; do you want it?"

"Yes," replied Walter; "give it to me."

He left the wagon and, going up to the bells, gave each a sharp, quick stroke on the side. The sound reverberated again and again, filling all the valley with its clear, musical tone.

"That is not how," said a voice beside him, and an Indian boy about his own age suddenly appeared as though from the earth. He had been sleeping, however, in the shadow of the bells, and the sound had awakened him.

Taking the stick from Walter's hand, he touched them one after another, but softly and slowly. How different were the echoing sounds from those which Walter had evoked!

"You know how to do it," said Mr. Page, handing him a quarter.

"It is in my family," said the boy gravely. "My grandfather, he ring them, and my father, and now I."

"Ah, I see," said Walter. "They are the finest bells I ever heard."

"I think they are the best in the world," said the boy, still with the hickory stick in his hand as they drove away. Charlie had forgotten to ask him for it, and probably he was not averse to keeping such a good defence against snakes and reptiles.

As they proceeded across the valley they could still hear at intervals the soft, delicious notes

played upon the ancient bells of his people by him of the third generation of bell-ringers of the fast diminishing, poverty-stricken but still devout Santa Isabels.

They stopped at Ramona for the night, and noon next day found them nearing home. Charlie was about to turn into a delightful woodland copse for luncheon when two ladies on horseback were seen approaching. Mr. Page at once recognized the Almirantes. The recognition was mutual. The Señora and the granddaughter came to the wagon and shook hands cordially with the occupants.

"Now you are only a mile and a half from my home," she said. "I beg that you will come and take dinner and pass the night with us."

At first they demurred, the party was so large, but the Señora was insistent.

"Come and see an old Spanish ranch house," she said. "You will possibly never see another. Come, I beg of you; all that we have is yours."

Ramona, the granddaughter, joined her entreaties to those of the Señora, and the Pages at last consented. The ladies rode ahead to give notice of their coming, and when the party reached the ranch everything was found in readiness as though for long-expected guests. Two neatly furnished bedrooms, each large

enough for a salon, were placed at their disposal, with plenty of water and fresh towels, very welcome after the long and dusty morning ride. Afterward, while waiting for dinner to be served, they sat in the long, covered porch, extending all around the large *patio*. There beautiful plants and flowers were growing, and several parrots hung in gilded cages.

When dinner was over the Señora took the elder ladies to show them her laces. Mr. Page rambled in the gardens and fields. The children, with Ramona and her brother, gathered at the edge of the ruined fountain, watching the toads that hopped over the rank moss.

"The Gordons are coming back soon," said Alejandro. "Then we shall have fine times again."

"But you will be at school," said his sister; "you will not be here."

"In vacation I will," he replied. "I wish I did not have to go back to school. I like it when I am there, but I would rather stay at home."

"What are you going to be when you are a man?" asked Walter. "A lawyer or a doctor?"

"Neither," said Alejandro. "I am going to stay here and be a rancher. I mean to plant

the finest fruits, and put in nuts, and do everything in the best possible way."

"That is so," laughed Ramona. "He is like that. He will be a rancher, as he calls it. And my grandmother will be pleased."

"Say, Alejandro," said Walter, who had been attentively regarding the boy; "you won't be mad if I tell you something, will you?"

The brother and sister looked at each other and smiled.

"You are going to say I have very dark skin, or something like that," said Alejandro. "So many people do who do not know us."

"No, not that," replied Walter. "But it was this—you look so much like Francisco, an Indian boy we liked so much at the Hot Springs, only you are not so dark."

"Francisco Perez?" asked Alejandro. "So I ought—he is my cousin."

"Your *cousin!*" exclaimed Walter and Nellie.

"Yes, he is our cousin," repeated Alejandro, stoutly. "He and Mauricio—and Cecilio—and many others at Warner's. Our mother is an Indian."

"Oh, I am sorry," said Walter, fearing he had made a mistake. "I would not have said anything——"

"And why not?" interrupted the other boy.

"We are not ashamed of it, Ramona nor I. Our mother is a good woman. Our father was the son of my grandmother."

"Naturally," said Ramona, and they all laughed, at the expense of Alejandro.

"I am not sure that I would have told you," said Alejandro, "only I knew that you did not despise the poor Indians as some do——"

"Despise them!" exclaimed Nellie. "We like them, and we love Francisco."

Ramona gave the child's hand an affectionate little squeeze. Nellie looked up at her and said:

"You are so sweet. I wish we had known you all summer. And your hair is so lovely." Ramona was wearing it in one long, heavy braid. Nothing could have been more simple or becoming.

"We will be friends, then," she rejoined, playfully. "We have so few. My grandmother does not know the Americans well, but the Gordons she likes a great deal. And now that they are coming home and are your friends, we shall be all friends together."

"That will be nice," said Nellie. "I hope mamma will let me come and stay with you sometimes——"

"I don't call that nice," remarked Walter,

"inviting yourself to a visit when you are hardly acquainted."

"Don't tease her," said Ramona. "She means well, and she shall come and stay with me."

"You can't help asking her now," said Walter, looking very glum. "I never knew her to be so impolite and bold before."

"But Walter," said Nellie, "I meant for Ramona—may I call you Ramona?—to come and visit us, too. We are going to be great friends."

"Bold?" chuckled Alejandro, with a smile. "That makes me think of something. When I first went to Santa Clara I did not know English as well as I do now, although I had been at the Mission."

"With the Indians?" inquired Walter, thoughtlessly.

"With the Indians—yes," said Alejandro. "And why not? My mother put me there; it was a good place, and I liked the Sisters very much."

Walter looked mystified. Ramona hastened to explain. "When he was little," she said, "Alejandro did not live with us. I have been with my grandmother since my father died. Alejandro was a little baby then. Our mother sent him, when he was old enough, to the Mission."

"And then my sister found me," added the boy. "But for her I should never have come here or known my grandmother."

"Well, that is too long a story," said Ramona. "Maybe some other time you will hear it, but not now. What were you going to say before, 'Jandro?"

"About 'bold,'" replied her brother. "When I first went up there some English words were strange to me. Or, rather, I did not understand their different meanings. One day a big boy, a new one, too, said he did not like bold girls. 'I like every one to be bold,' I said. 'Girls are horrid when they are bold,' said he. 'Sometimes they have to be,' I said. 'Suppose a mountain lion should come, and a girl would have to save herself from him, and would shoot, though afraid—then she would be bold.' Oh, how he laughed; and he said, 'You mean *brave,* don't you?' And then he told me the difference."

"If you like Indians maybe you would be pleased to hear some Indian songs," said Ramona.

"We would," replied Nellie. "There was a little baby up at the Springs, and its father used to put it to sleep in the afternoons by swinging it in a hammock. He sang in the

queerest way. His song was pretty, too; but whenever he saw that we were listening he would stop."

"Come, then, to Concelio in the kitchen—she will sing for you," said Alejandro.

They followed their young host, Nellie holding fast to Ramona's hand. Concelio was shelling peas.

"You must sing for these friends of ours, Concelio," said Alejandro. "Shall I get your guitar, Ramona? It sounds so much prettier with the guitar."

"Maybe they will not like," said the old woman, "my voice is so cracked."

"Oh, but we will," rejoined Walter. "We love the Indians, and we like their songs." The old woman murmured something in Spanish, still smiling, however.

"What did she say?" whispered Nellie to Ramona.

"She said you were strange white people if you loved the Indians, but that she believed you were speaking the truth and would sing for you."

Alejandro returned with the guitar. Concelio seated herself on the doorstep with the group around her.

"This is putting the baby to sleep," said Con-

celio, beginning to sing in her own tongue, the while she touched a few minor chords of the guitar:

*Alo-o-o-o-o-o-o-a!
Swinging in the trees,
Swinging with the breeze,
Baby, go to sleep.
Away, you naughty flies,
Don't sting my baby's eyes.
She must sleep—sleep.
Alo-o-o-o-o-o-o-a!

"That tune would put anybody to sleep," said Nellie; "but it is pretty."

"Here is another," said the old woman. "It goes much quicker."

Amonda was a thief,
And she stole a piece of beef.

But the beef was very tough—
Soon old woman had enough.

Butcher Amonda sees,
Laughs at her behind the trees.

Laughs because the stolen beef
Was too tough for wicked thief.

* A free translation.

"Now one more, Concelio," said Ramona; "that little hymn."

Changing the expression of her face at once to one of the deepest devotion, the Indian woman sang:

O Maria, O Maria,
Save us from our foes,
From the heat and snows;
Save us while we sing
From every evil thing,
O Maria!

When at morn we rise,
Watch us from the skies;
When at night we rest,
Fold us to thy breast,
O Maria!

Keep us in thy care,
Always, everywhere;
Lead us to thy Son
When our days are done,
O Maria!

There was something very pathetic and beautiful in the refrain of this song. While Concelio was singing the elders came to listen. They would fain have heard more but, laugh-

ingly shaking her head, Concelio ran away and hid in her own room until they were gone.

The Señora would not permit her visitors to leave till next morning. When at last they tore themselves away it was with the understanding that Ramona and her brother should visit the Pages for a couple of days before school began.

The friendship thus formed still continues, and is shared with that of the Gordons, who have returned to California.

Francisco, true to his promise, came in October with a large load of wood, and several sacks of walnuts which he had gathered for the children.

He told them there had been another *Junta,* the people still persisting that they did not wish to leave their homes. "At last," he said, "the white men grew angry, and said some Indians must come with them and help choose, since they knew best what they would like. 'Will you come Captain Cecilio?' said one.

" 'No, I will not,' said Cecilio. 'First I will die.'

" 'That is wrong,' said the man. 'You will be sorry in the end, for you will have to go, and you will give a bad example to your people.'

" 'My people may do as they please,' said Cecilio. 'I give them no counsel. I tell them

nothing. Whosoever wishes to go along with you, he may; but not I.' And Captain Cecilio walked away, oh, very, very sorrowful."

"And who went?" asked Mr. Page.

"My uncle, Mauricio, Ambrosio and Velasquez. They did not want to go; but someone must go. Soon they will choose, and it may be that once more we shall be permited to harvest our crops at Cupa—but for the last time, Señor, for the last time."

And so it came to pass. Once again, and only once, were the harvests gathered; once more was heard the sound of the primitive flail in the granaries of Cupa. Then its children were bidden to make ready their goods and chattels, their horses and cattle, their women folk, their little ones and their dogs, weeping and wailing as they went reluctantly forth from their dismantled homes. Some among them there were—these the very old—who escaped to the mountains, and who were never heard of again.

In the end no resistance was made. The Indians obeyed the mandates of the stronger race like the sullen but not insubordinate children they are. And as wagon after wagon from the deserted village reached the summit of the hill,

giving the last view of the vapory cloud rising from the *Agua Caliente* of their fathers and their fathers' fathers, each paused upon its onward course, and the occupants looked back upon the home they were leaving forever. Then, folding their garments about them and bowing their heads in voiceless sorrow, the children of Cupa, lonely and broken-hearted, passed into exile.

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